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THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

SAINT ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

EDITED BY

REV. EUGENE GRIMM,

Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

THE ASCETICAL WORKS.

Volume XIX.

LETTERS.

Volume II.

PART I.

General Correspondence.

THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION.

RÑDE PATER:

Memoriam gloriosi Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Fundatoris, centesimo, ab ejus obitu, adventante anno, pio et admodum opportuno consilio recolere aggressus es, dum omnia ipsius opera anglice vertenda, et typis edenda curasti. Summus itaque Pontifex, cui tum S. Doctoris exaltatio, tum fidelium utilitas summopere cordi est libentissime excepit 9 volumina huc usque edita, quæ Ei offerre voluisti. Ac dum meritas Tibi laudes de hac perutili tua cura præbet, et gratias de filiali oblatione agit, Benedictionem, quam tuis obsequentissimis litteris petiisti, Emi quoque archiepiscopi Baltimorensis commendationi obsecundans, ex intimo corde impertiit.

Hæc ad Te deferens fausta cuncta ac felicia a Domino Tibi adprecor.

Paternitatis Tuæ,

Addictissimus,

M. CARD. RAMPOLLA.

ROMAE, die 4 Junii, 1888.

TRANSLATION.

REVEREND FATHER:

As the centenary of the death of the illustrious Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer drew near, you conceived the pious and appropriate plan of shedding a new lustre on his memory by translating all his works into English and publishing them. The Holy Father, therefore, who has at heart the spiritual advancement of the faithful, as well as the exaltation of the holy Doctor, has most graciously accepted the nine volumes thus far published, which you wished to present to him. While bestowing upon you well-deserved praise for your useful labor, and thanking you for the gift inspired by your filial love, he gives you from his heart the blessing which you humbly asked for in your letter, complying also with the request of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore.

As the bearer of this, I wish you all happiness in the Lord.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

M. CARD. RAMPOLLA.

ROME, June 4, 1888.

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LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

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APPROBATION.

By virtue of the authority granted me by the Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, Superior-General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I hereby sanction the publication of the work entitled "Letters," which is Vol. XIX. of the new and complete edition in English of the works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, called "The Centenary Edition."

FERDINAND A. LITZ, C. SS. R.,
Sup. Prov. Baltimorensis.

BALTIMORE, MD., *March* 8, 1892.

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General Correspondence.

II.

DURING THE EPISCOPATE.

(1762 — 1775.)

LETTERS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI.

PART I.

General Correspondence.

(Continuation.)

LETTER 374.

To His Brother D. Ercole de Liguori, at Naples.

Grief at having been appointed to the episcopate.—Request for services.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, March 21, 1762.

My dear Brother: I have been so amazed by the command which I have received from the Pope to accept the episcopate out of obedience that I am like a man bereft of his senses at the thought that I have to leave the Congregation after having been a member of it for thirty years.

For the rest, I thank you for your offer to lend me money to pay expenses. Had you not expressed a wish to do this, I had already thought of writing to the Pope, as a last resort, that I have no money to pay for the Bulls and for the other necessary expenses; and who knows whether

on account of this inability he might not have delivered me from the episcopate?

I had written to Cardinal Spinelli [1] to help me out of this difficulty, but he did just the contrary. What more can I say? I sacrifice myself to the will of God.

But remember that the money needed will amount to a great deal. I moreover expect to hear from Rome what will be the amount. But for all the expenses at Rome and at Naples the sum needed will reach four thousand ducats, or at least thirty-five hundred.[2]

Yes, it is understood that I must give back the money together with the interest that you will have to pay; but you see that I shall not be able to return it at once.

If the episcopate has an income of five thousand ducats, I think that I shall be able to give back fifteen hundred a year with interest; because the episcopate will not be free from the payment of pensions, and when I enter upon its duties, there will be much expense.

Moreover, I beg you to hurry, since I wish to set out for Rome as soon as possible; I need to take with me the money for the Bulls and for other expenses, and will have to stay there a long time. I must hasten before the Pope goes to the country in May.

As regards the house in which I am to stay, I should not like to burden myself with expenses. I think that for the occasions on which I go to Naples it will be sufficient for me to have one or two rooms of your first story, where I can receive the persons of quality who may come to see me. The upper story will be for the use of my companions, as it will not suit either me or the persons that will call upon me.

I should, I admit, procure a carriage; but I shall wait a

[1] Cardinal Spinelli, formerly archbishop of Naples, was living at Rome since 1751.

[2] 4000 ducats = 17,000 frs.

little; for if the bishop, my predecessor has left a serviceable carriage, I could buy it very cheap. Therefore put off for a while buying the carriage of Marquis Valva, I shall make inquiries, and if the carriage of the bishop will not answer, you may buy for me that of the Marquis.

This week or the next I shall be at Naples, and then we shall speak about matters. But for the time of my stay at the capital it will be necessary to buy at once the carriage and the mules that I need; I shall use Forcella's carriage for the visits that I have to make.

I beg you to do one thing for me. I have to go to Caserta to visit the members of the Council of the Regency,[1] and it will be necessary for me to stay one evening at Caserta. This evening I should like to spend at the convent of the Carmelite Fathers. Please therefore to speak, or have the porter of the Piazza, to speak to the Prior of the Carmelites, so that he may procure for me the convenience of being able to stay one evening at the convent.

You rejoice at my elevation, and I do nothing but weep. The episcopate was then reserved for me in my old age! But may the holy will of God be always done; it wishes me to be a martyr during the last days of my life! I have lost my sleep and my appetite, and I am stupefied at thinking that the Pope, who never imposes an obligation to accept, should have made it obligatory on me to accept.

Please salute Donna Rachele for me;[2] I embrace you.

Your very affectionate brother,

ALFONSO,
Bishop elect of Sant' Agata.

1 Charles III. had been called to the throne of Spain in 1759; he had as his successor at Naples his son Ferdinand IV. still under age.

2 Donna Rachele, the wife of D. Ercole.

[*P. S.*] To-day, Sunday, I am not well; this morning I was seized with a fever, and this evening while writing, it has not yet passed away.

After an old copy.

LETTER 375.

To Father Giovanni Mazzini.

He announces his departure for Rome.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

NAPLES, April 14, 1762.

Recommend me and have me most specially recommended to Jesus Christ. If I do not lose my head now, I shall never lose it. Mgr. Borgia says that a case like mine has not yet occurred.

I was to go to Nocera this morning; but on account of a letter from [Cardinal Giuseppe] Spinelli, who wishes me to come, etc., it has been decided with the advice of several others, that I should set out for Rome, and that I should put myself into the hands of his Eminence that he may direct me.

Unhappy me! I left the world when yet a young man, and now when I have become old, I am obliged to begin again to have intercourse with the world!

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 376.

To the Sacred Congregation of the Index.

Petition for permission to read prohibited books.

Alfonso de Liguori, Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, most humbly supplicates your Eminences to grant him the power of reading and retaining prohibited books. It is with the greatest thankfulness, etc.

(*Answer to the petition.*)

Feria 2ª, die 24 maii 1762.

Sacræ Indicis Congregationis decreto, et quatenus opus est, auctoritate SSmi D. N. D. Clementis Papæ XIII. Emo Dno Cardinali Galli Præfecto collata, liceat Oratori retinere et legere omnes et quoscumque, etiam hæreticorum auctorum, prohibitos libros, quos sub clavi teneat, ne ad aliorum manus deveniant, excepto opere inscripto "De l' Esprit." In quorum. . .

Datum Romæ in Palatio Apostolico Quirinali, die ac anno supra scriptis.

Fr. P. T. Schiara, Ord. Præd. S. C. secretar.

(Translation.)

Monday, May 24, 1762.

By a decree of the Congregation of the Index, and as far as it is necessary, by the authority of our Holy Father, Pope Clement XIII., delegated to his Eminence Cardinal Galli, Prefect of this Congregation, it is permitted to the suppliant to read and retain all the forbidden books whatsoever, even those that have heretics as their authors. He shall, however, take care to keep them under lock and key so that they may not fall into the hands of others. To this permission an exception is made in regard to the book entitled "De l' Esprit."[1]

Given at Rome at the Apostolic Palace of the Quirinal, the day and year above-mentioned.

Fr. P. T. Schiara, of the Order of Friars Preachers, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

1 Pope Clement XIII. had condemned this work of Helvetius, January 31, 1759.

LETTER 377.

To Prince di Centola.

He announces to him his preconization to the Church of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

ROME, June 15, 1762.

Your Excellency: His Holiness having deigned in yesterday's Consistory to preconize me for the episcopal church of S. Agata de' Goti, I regard it among my chief duties to give to your Excellency respectful notice of this attestation of my constant attachment that I profess for you.

I beg your Excellency to accept with approbation this act of the due respect which I pay to you, and to honor it with your most venerated commands.

May I earnestly beg your Excellencey to dispense yourself from answering me; for I shall personally offer you my respects and orally express to you the perfect, constant, and inviolable submission with which I have the honor to be

Your very humble, devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After the original, the property of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 378.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

Thanks and various counsels.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

SANT' AGATA, July 31, 1762.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I have received with great pleasure the bouquets of flowers destined for my chapel, and I express my most cordial thanks as well to you as to those religious for the trouble taken. Have the kindness to thank them in my name, and at the same time

tell them that I am quite satisfied and pleased with the bouquets made by them, and that I feel very much obliged to them.

I rejoice that into your church there has been introduced the daily visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and that the people are beginning to grow fervent in this great devotion. I shall pray to the Lord to increase in you more and more his holy love.

As regards the confessors, I shall be pleased to know them all, not so much for the purpose of examining them as to see them. Let them, however, come, and tell them that I will give them time for the examination as long as I remain here, but in the mean time I wish to see them.

I thank you very much for the pork that you have sent me, and do not take it amiss if I return it, since I have wished to be on my guard against receiving anything from any one. I therefore regard the present as having been made, and I beg you to keep it.

May your health be good. Recommend me to the Lord. I impart to you my pastoral blessing, and believe me,

Yours very affectionately and devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 379.

To His Brother Don Ercole de Liguori.

He speaks to him about certain domestic details.

[SANT' AGATA, Month of August, 1762.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

With God's grace I am in the best of health, and after dinner am able to perform the exercises of the Rule.

I wish to consult you whether it is better to plant here in the field white mulberry trees. I thank you for the torches.

Domenico Antonio,[1] I have sent away, and the coachman will also go away; they did not suit me.

I salute Donna Rachele and Don Gaetano,[2] and do not forget to recommend me every day to Jesus Christ.

Your affectionate brother ALFONSO.

After the original in possession of the Benedictine Fathers of Downside, England.

LETTER 380.

To the Sovereign Pontiff Clement XIII.

He solicits the introduction of the cause of beatification of Father Leonardo da Porto Maurizio.

[SANT' AGATA, August 23, 1762.]

Most Holy Father: For many years I have always admired and venerated the great servant of God Fra Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, apostolic missionary of the convent of S. Bonaventura at Rome on account of his widespread reputation as a saint, and the stupendous miracles wrought by God through him. I have, however, felt greater admiration for him since I have read his wonderful Life.

I have therefore felt myself impelled to ask and to beg your Holiness to proceed with his beatification, hoping that it will prove to be of great consolation and profit to the whole Christian world, and especially to all those provinces in which the servant of God was engaged in diffusing with the divine word the good odor of his holy virtues.

[1] His family name was Ianella. He was sent away for having accepted a present.

[2] The priest Don Gaetano de Liguori was a brother of the saint.

I respectfully prostrate myself at your sacred feet, Most Holy Father, and ever remain,

Your Holiness's very humble, devoted,
grateful servant, and obedient son,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After an old copy.

LETTER 381.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery of Camigliano.

He exhorts her to resignation and confidence in God.

[The year 1762?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

I write you in haste these few lines, not having a moment's time to take breath.

In the state in which you are you have nothing else to do than to humble yourself, and resign yourself to the divine will, to ask for grace and trust in God, for this pain is a sign that God loves you.

Always pray to Jesus Christ that he may help me to carry the cross that he has imposed upon my shoulders.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

LETTER 382.

To the Sovereign Pontiff Clement XIII.

New petition relative to the beatification of the great servant of God, Father Leonardo da Porto Maurizio.

[SANT' AGATA DE' GOTI, September 14, 1762.]

Most Holy Father: I renew my petition to your Holiness for the beatification of the servant of God, Fra Leonardo da

Porto Maurizio of the convent of S. Bonaventura. The reasons that induce me to do so are the reputation of sanctity that this illustrious preacher of the Gospel has left in nearly the whole of Italy and the numerous miracles that he wrought after his death.

For these reasons, I beg your Holiness to accept my humble and earnest petitions for this end; I respectfully kiss your sacred feet and sign myself,

Your most humble, devoted,
grateful servant and son,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After an old copy.

LETTER 383.

To His Brother Don Ercole de Liguori.

Councils in regard to the choice of a wife.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, November 5, 1762.

This morning I said the second Mass for Donna Rachele [1] at the privileged altar, and to-morrow and the day after, or at the farthest next week, I will say the two other Masses for you, in order that the Lord may grant you what is best for your soul.

What I beg of you is to be careful to take as your wife a woman who leads an edifying life, and not one of an ambitious and of worldly character. You are advanced in years; if she is too young and always wishes to live at Naples to go into society every evening, she will easily find some *cicisbeo* [2] according to fashion, who conformably to

[1] Donna Rachele, recently deceased, had been Don Ercole's first wife.

[2] Lalande in his "Voyage d' Italie" mentions this Neapolitan custom against which St. Alphonsus inveighs with just severity. A

present usage will often come to see her ladyship. She will scarcely be able to bear with you, and either you will have to put her into a convent, or you will have to lead a disturbed life, and what is worse, to be in a continual disquiet of conscience. Thus it would be better you would choose one of less noble birth, and less rich than to create for yourself embarrassments.

Do not fail to declare your intentions beforehand to her and to her parents, namely, that you will not bind yourself to remain always at Naples, that you are not fond of frequent visits, and other similar things. Reflect well on what I have just written to you; for if you do not take my advice, you will have a disturbed mind and conscience during your whole life.

As for myself, I am well, thank God, but full of a thousand anxieties about the blessed Spouse that has fallen to my lot. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 384.

To the Same.

The same subject. — The saint explains to his brother the financial trouble in which he is.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 12, 1762.

I am glad to hear of the handsome and numerous proposals of marriage which are made to you; but I must

modern geographer Malte-Brun also speaks of it in the following words: "The gravest reproach to the manners of the higher classes is in regard to the state of *cicisbeism*. According to this custom, a married lady can have her *cicisbeo* or *cavalier*, who accompanies her everywhere when out walking, at the theatre, when abroad, even at Mass." — *Geographie universelle*, tome iv. To be fair, we add that this incredible tolerance had its exceptions.

repeat that you should be careful to choose one that will not cause you any disquietude, especially at the present time when ladies are accustomed to have several husbands. Be convinced that young women become more easily attached to one of their own age, than to those of an advanced age, as you are; for the desire to be courted turns their heads.

Another thing which I counsel you now that you are alone: put away from your house the young maid-servants. The devil always remains a devil. With the proximate occasion, and deprived of all surveillance, I myself would fear lest I should fall. You may say to these servants that you will take them back after you have married.

I have already said the Masses to your intention that you may make a good choice. Keep yourself united with God, and all will be well.

Let us now come to the painful subject of money. You ask me for money;[1] and I should like you to lend me perhaps this year some more of it, since here I have incurred another debt of more than four hundred ducats, [2] which I have taken from the money destined for the building of the seminary. Now this building has already been begun, as the seminarians have no place to stay during the summer.

I have asked what is the exact sum of the income, and the answer given to me was that the sum was nothing more than about sixty ducats, and the time is at hand for paying the contributions and the pension.

It is true, I have some grain for sale, but this will be sold only towards the end of December; and I am also told

1 On the occasion of the departnre of the saint for Rome, Don Ercole had loaned him a large sum of money (see Letter 374) which he wished to have returned to him on account of his second marriage.

2 1700 frs.

that I must wait till March and May to make a little more profit.

During this first year expenses have been ruinous. I have had to repair the two episcopal residences, that of Sant' Agata and that of Arienzo, though only what was necessary was done, and done in a wretched manner; I have had to pay what is due to the Chapter; finally I had to give four hundred ducats to the Nuncio for the transaction.

However, what I can do for you I shall see when I sell the grain; but at present you would have to put me in prison to force from me even a *carlino*.[1] And know that I give away only a few *grains*[2] in alms. And this is the painful conclusion at which I hinted above.

I feel compassion for you, since now you receive no income, and have many expenses. But the misery is that the episcopate and marriage have come together.

I am also espoused, but to a Spouse that does not give me a moment's rest.

I embrace you, and pray to God that he may provide for you.

Your most affectionate brother,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] 0.42 centimes.

[2] 0.04 centimes.

LETTER 385.

To a Religious.

He congratulates him on his conversion, and exhorts him to confide in God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 15, 1762.

Very Reverend Father: I greatly rejoiced when I received your letter announcing the perfect conversion of your soul to God. And this I say to you: confide much in God, who, just as he is angry with the obstinacy of a sinful soul, so he is pleased with it when it is converted, and if he threatens to punish the obstinate, he gives superabundant graces to the one that is converted.

Take great courage! love God and serve him as much as you have offended him; serve him with the greater fervor, the more you have offended him, and do not fear.

I will recommend you to the Lord in my poor prayers, and will ask my Fathers to do the same.

I also beg you to recommend me to the Lord, and full of esteem, I remain,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 386.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

Remarks in regard to the confessors of nuns. [1]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 20, 1762.

I did not wish to send Father [D. Salvatore] Gallo, because I do not desire that the practice be introduced into the Congregation that our Fathers should be the extraordinary confessors of nuns, as this is expressly prohibited by the Rule; but since he has come, I give him permission to remain two more days, at the most three days; then he must depart immediately, and it will be absolutely useless for you to write to me again about the matter.

In regard to the exercises, I do not know whether I shall be able afterwards to have them given by another, since it would be impossible for my Fathers, as it is contrary to the Rule.

I bless you and all those nuns.

I positively wish that the confessor of the nuns should be changed, and in future, I shall establish it as a rule that he be changed every three years. The ordinances of Rome prescribe this, and justly so, and I will act accordingly; tell the nuns that in this matter they must be obedient.

It is impossible to give them a confessor who will please all; if they choose him themselves he will have been appointed by their own will; but if the bishop appoints him, he will have been appointed by the will of God; if therefore they oppose this appointment, they oppose the will of God.

In regard to the mission, I will see whether it can be

[1] This letter forms two in the Roman edition of 1815. As they bear the same date and are addressed to the same person, we have united them into one.

given during the carnival, but it will be difficult. . . . Hence I can hardly have it given before spring. In spring I hope to have the Fathers of my Congregation; then I myself shall go to Frasso and will preach the evening sermon; for it is my intention to go to all the large places and to preach at least once the principal sermon if God gives me health. God accompanies with more abundant graces the voice of the pastor.

I bless you, and all the nuns.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 387.

To the Same.

He appoints a confessor for a convent of nuns.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 6, 1762.

I have had recourse to the second expedient, since your Reverence has approved of Canon D. Mattia; the more so, as you tell me the administrators and the nuns are favorably inclined to him. Therefore be kind enough to send him the enclosed letter, in which I formally enjoin upon him to come and serve his native place.

As for the payment of sixty ducats, the Canon, who is from the country, will be satisfied; but how can a strange priest come, if he is to receive as remuneration only twenty-four ducats, since for the other thirty-six he will have to say Masses? I repeat: A strange priest, who is to have a house of his own will never accept these conditions.

I am astonished at the difficulties that these administrators are creating for me. A good confessor is the most necessary thing to maintain a well-regulated monastery. With sixty ducats where am I to find a good confessor?

Or have we always to find a confessor who belongs to the place? And when he cannot be found, should we have

to see the monastery ruined? Must we think only of the temporal and little or nothing of the spiritual good?

To tell the truth, I am but little edified by these administrators; and this you may tell them.

As for the consent of the delegate, had they only written to him that for twenty-four ducats it was impossible to find a strange priest to come here, the delegate would certainly have granted at once an increase of pay. Enough on this point; let us now hope to settle the matter by means of a confessor of the place; but in future it will be necessary to remedy this inconvenience.

I cordially bless you and remain

Yours very affectionately,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 388.

To His Brother Don Ercole de Liguori.

More advice relative to his marriage.

December 12, 1762.

. . . . . To speak plainly, it appears to me that these projects of marriage will hardly end well; for it looks as if your pretensions are too high.

To wish to have a lady of noble birth and of wealth, seems to me to exceed our condition, which is not altogether what it was formerly. I fear that when a conclusion is come to, all these fine proposals will slip away from you.

I pray to God that you may succeed, as may be best for the advantage of your soul and for your own tranquillity. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xvi.

LETTER 389.

To Don Lorenzo Jannotta, Canon of the Metropolitan Church of Capua.

Exhortation to perfect resignation.

Live Jesus and Mary!

ARIENZO, December 16, 1762.

Very Reverend Sir: I have received your most esteemed letter, and in compliance with your request I will ask our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin that you may be healed of your infirmity, if such a thing is good for your soul.

In the mean time, I beg you to put everything into the hands of the divine will; otherwise we shall not receive this grace.

I also ask you to recommend me to Jesus Christ and believe me,

Your very grateful and affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 390.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

Orders and counsels relative to a mission to be given at Frasso.

[AIROLA, January 1, 1763.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Very Reverend Sir: This morning the missionaries of Father Pavone passed through this place to give missions at Airola. It is a very good band of twenty subjects.

I do not wish to lose this fine opportunity to have a mission at Frasso, since afterwards it will be difficult to

have it done; therefore after Airola, that is, within fifteen days, your Reverence is hereby notified that eight or ten subjects will go to Frasso.

I hear that at Frasso the archpriest's church is small, and not capable of holding the people; it would therefore be well to have the mission given in two churches. In order to do so, should the churches be distant from each other, it will be necessary to procure, if possible, two houses to lodge the missionaries; but if this is not possible, all would have to be lodged in the same house. I beg you to try to find two houses, should the churches be at some distance from each other.

I trust in the zeal of your Reverence. I already know that in this part of the country but little assistance can be expected, and there are few that co-operate; hence you will have to do everything yourself.

Speak in my name to the gentlemen of the council or to others as to whatever is needed for the house and as to the beds. And if it should be necessary for me to write to any one, let me know and I will write to him.

Tell also the vicar forane [1] in my name that he should assist you as much as he can.

Please answer this letter, so that I may know what is to be done; but take your time to do everything needful at your earliest convenience, and then inform me of all by a special messenger; I am at present staying at Airola. I bless you.

[*P. S.*] I recommend to you as strongly as possible this mission, which weighs heavily upon me; and I trust to your zeal and diligence, so that great fruit may be gathered from this work.

I again bless you. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the Roman edition.

[1] One exercising authority at a *distance* from the place where the bishop resides.

LETTER 391.

To the Same.

He praises him for the zeal that he displays in preparing for the mission.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 2, 1763.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Your letter has given me pleasure, and although I have been scandalized by the conduct of a certain parish priest who resorted to so many subterfuges to avoid having a mission, yet I have been edified and am full of consolation at seeing that you on the contrary, have neglected nothing to secure a mission, and to have the word of God preached to your flock. This is the reason why I have tried to arrange the matter for you, and I will inform you of the day on which the mission is to begin. It will be my endeavor to send you the best subjects, and in such sufficient number as will satisfy the people.

I hope that the mission will be given at Frasso, but at the present time I cannot tell when it will take place, for a mission has to be given in the villages and hamlets of Airola, after it has been given in the city itself, and then the Fathers will go to Durazzano where there will be a large mission. Do not however be uneasy; for I shall have ten Fathers to come, and I will inform you a long time before when they will come. I shall send in the meantime a letter to the magistrate.

I understand all that you tell me in your second letter about the confessor of those nuns; and I acknowledge that on this subject I am so much embarrassed that I do not know upon what to decide. I do not, however, believe that the Canon is suffering from his chest; for if this were so, he would certainly not expose himself by hearing the

confessions of the nuns. And what should I say in regard to this matter? Let us wait for certain information, and then we shall do what God has disposed. See, however whether a remedy can be applied, since the mission will not be given there before the 15th of the present month. Your Reverence may, therefore, rest in this expectation.

Full of esteem and affection I communicate to you my pastoral blessing.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 392.

To the Same.

He insists that the mission should be given in two churches.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 5, 1763.

I have already in another letter given you to understand how edified I have been to see the zeal and the eagerness which you have shown in order that you might have a mission.

Now I make known to your Reverence that I absolutely wish that the mission should take place in two churches, in order that everything should be as it should, and thus all the people may be satisfied.

I beg you, therefore, to prepare another church, and also another house, in case the distance would not permit the Fathers to occupy only one house. All this you will please communicate to the municipality so that it may also assist you in preparing what is needed.

I am sure that your Reverence will do what I have asked of you, for so I have arranged matters with the Fathers. Giving you my pastoral blessing, I remain,

Yours very truly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] My dear D. Francesco, when the church is too small to hold all the people, the mission cannot be a success; this is the reason why I wish you to get ready two churches; they need not be near each other. The Fathers wished to give the mission only in one church, but I have begged them to have it given in two churches, and I hope they will consent; otherwise I shall feel aggrieved. Please therefore see to it that the mission takes place in two churches, and I bless you. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the original in possession of Rev. Father Antonio Altamura of the Pious Schools, at S. Pantaleo at Rome.

LETTER 393.

To the Same.

Dispositions made in regard to the confessors of the place during the mission, and pious recommendations to all the clergy.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 7, 1763.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I inform you that there will arrive at your house a goodly company of ten Fathers of the Congregation of Father Pavone, to give the mission.

I therefore ask of you, that when they come, according to the notice that I will give you in advance, you will be so kind as to request all the Reverend clergy to meet the missionaries on their arrival; this is an honor due to the mission which God sends.

Moreover, order in my name that all the confessors abstain during the mission from hearing confessions, as they are suspended during that time.

In regard to yourself, as archpriest, I cannot suspend you, but I also beg you not to hear confessions during that time. I leave the affair to the judgment of the Fathers, should they need help during the mission.

You should also ordain, in my name, that all the priests and clerics should attend the exercises, and as to the exercises of the priests, let some one be charged with the duty of recording the names of those that are absent without a just cause, and then the names should be sent to me.

It is also my wish that on this occasion a congregation of priests should be found at Frasso, and that it be affiliated, after a memorial has been presented for this purpose, to the Congregation of Father Pavone, the members of which have so many faculties and indulgences. I have already recommended to these missionaries the establishing of such a congregation.

Besides, during the time of the mission take care that the ecclesiastics wear long cassocks. With this I bless you and remain

Yours very truly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of D. Pasquale Diana, Canon of the Cathedral of Aversa.

LETTER 394.

To the Same.

New recommendations on the same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 12, 1763.

I thank you for having prepared the two churches for the mission.

I, however, beg you not to tell the missionaries that I have insisted upon having the mission held in two churches, one perhaps being sufficient, as was the case the last time. The Fathers were not disposed to give the mission in two churches; for they would then, they said, have to appoint

two preachers to preach the important sermons, and two to give the instructions; this seemed difficult to them; jealousy, they thought, might arise between the two preachers. If therefore any one should approve of their repugnance, they will give the two missions with a bad grace, and become dissatisfied with me, because I did not allow them to have their own way. I insist the more on this since at Durazzano where they are to go afterwards, I also desire that they give the mission in two churches, the archpriest's church of that place being too small to contain all the people.

If they give the two missions against their will, it may happen that at Durazzano they may resolve to give the mission only in one church; this would cause me great displeasure, because, I repeat, my dear Don Francesco, when the church is not large enough, the mission is almost useless.

As for us in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, it is our invariable custom to divide the missions whenever the church is not large enough.

In the beginning, your church will seem to be large enough, but when the fervor of the people increases, as I hope it will, since these missionaries are able subjects who speak clearly and attract the people, you will see how advantageous it was to have given the mission in two churches.

If after that the people do not follow the holy exercises, I will attribute this to my sins; but God will accept my good intention, and your Reverence will have the merit of obedience, namely, that of the trouble that you are taking. I bless then all the difficulties and all the unpleasantness that you will experience in this mission.

No, Canon Sanbiase is not among the missionaries; if he were I would have notified you. It is therefore enough to provide one room only for Don Giuseppe Jorio. I beg

you again to have an understanding with the latter in regard to all the exercises that are to be given, and what is most important, in regard to all the good works that are to be established in a durable manner.

God knows how I sympathize with you in your troubles, since I see that your Reverence is quite alone, without any one to help you; but the Lord wishes this, in order that you may have great merit in the reform and the spiritual benefits of your parish.

I hope to be able to visit you without fail in spring. At present, sick as I am and in this cold weather, I would not dare to go to a place where it is colder than elsewhere. I wished to go in accordance with the request of Don Giuseppe Jorio, but I should have had a scruple of conscience on account of the catarrh of the chest from which I usually suffer and which reduces me to the verge of death. This spring I will certainly not fail to visit you if it so pleases God. I bless you and remain,

Yours very affectionately and very devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 395.

To Don Matteo Migliore, Parish Priest at S. Maria a Vico.

He exhorts him to have patience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 15, 1763.

My dear Don Matteo: How is it possible to shut the mouths of so many people who speak what happens to come to their heads? We must suffer and let them talk. The virtue which your Reverence possesses will remedy all.

I have, however, already written that the evil may be

stopped as much as possible namely that these talkers should control their tongues. I repeat: do not mind what is said, because those that speak so are rough people without discretion; but those who are gentlemen are much edified by your charity.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, and I remain

Yours very affectionately and devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 396.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

Measures to be taken to assure the success of the mission.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

AIROLA, January 15, 1763.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Just this morning I learned for certain that the missionaries will go to Frasso on Thursday morning. They have sent word that they wish to have twelve riding-horses, and that they wished to have them here on Wednesday evening. Please, then, see that they are brought here. If twelve of them cannot be had at Frasso, let me know this at once, for I will then try to find here those that are wanting; but first endeavor to procure them at your place.

See that on Thursday morning a dinner is prepared for the Fathers; as according to their custom they will pay for everything.

What I moreover beg you to attend to is to have the mission in two churches.

I have already asked the Superior of the place to do me this favor, because I have been assured by some practical persons that the church of the archpriest is not large

enough for the people; and when this is the case the mission will be of no use either to those that do not come, or to those that come; because those that come, are so crowded and disturbed that they have little of the sermon, and the preacher can hardly preach effectively on account of the cries of the children and on account of the people who wish to pass or who are constantly distracting him. These are things that have happened to me many times, and so I speak from experience.

But to tell the truth: where before I was much edified in seeing the willingness of your Reverence to accept the mission with so much pleasure, I was afterwards not much edified in hearing of the repugnance that your Reverence exhibited to have the mission given in two churches, as I so very earnestly requested you to do.

You wrote that in the collegiate church the saying of the Office would be disturbed by the missionaries. This could easily be remedied, Your Reverence can in my name order the collegiates to say the morning Office in the sacristy, as is done in so many places; and if the sacristy is not large enough, they may at least say the Office in a low voice, in order that the confessions may be interfered with as little as possible.

Enough: in any case I wish that the mission should be given in two churches; and should the missionaries make difficulties, it will be the business of your Reverence to persuade them to have the mission given in your church and in the collegiate church by telling them that such is my wish; otherwise I should be dissatisfied, thinking that the mission will be a failure.

I beg you, therefore, when the mission begins, to have an understanding about everything with Father Don Giuseppe Jorio, because he has established here many things that are now permanent, such as the congregation of priests, aggregated to that of Father Pavone, the con-

gregation of gentlemen, the congregation of clerics and of young men, and above all the confraternity or the instruction of the young women who have to assemble every festival in a church where either your Reverence or another competent priest will give a thorough instruction how they are to behave at home, at church, how they are to pray, how they are to receive the sacraments, etc.; but this instruction is to be only for them.

This exercise if given to young women can sanctify the whole country. Enough: I recommend it as much as possible to you. I repeat, have an understanding with Don Giuseppe Jorio, who is a most invaluable missionary.

I hope to God that this mission will, above all others, sanctify the country, especially through the work that Father Jorio will leave behind.

As regards the exercises that will be given to the priests, your Reverence shall impose it as a duty on some priest to take note of those that are absent whether priests or clerics; at least, those who neglect the exercises, after dinner, for I wish to know who they are. I bless you.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 397.

To the Same.

Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 19, 1763.

My dear Don Francesco: I am delighted to hear that the great sermon is now preached in two churches. I know that this was not your fault that it was not done in the beginning.

I have received the papers from Don Giuseppe together with his note. I have answered him by a long letter

herewith enclosed; but I wish that your Reverence should read it to him word for word, because I wish that you should also inform Father Superior of all that I have therein written about the mission of Durazzano; the letter if it is not given as I say it should be given, half of it will be lost.

Moreover, tell Father Superior that I have been asked to have a mission given in the hamlet of S. Agnese at Arienzo, for which, four subjects would be sufficient.

These good Fathers, I know, have already accepted numerous labors in my diocese; hence I do not dare to ask them for another mission at S. Agnese. However, if they could permit four, or at least three Fathers to give it, they would render me a great favor,

But I repeat, I do not dare to ask them; I only say that if they had time and the subjects to give the mission I should be very happy.

As for C. N., I hear that his conduct has been good. *Amen.* He also leads a studious life, so Father Giuseppe tells me, and visits the congregations, but I do not read that your Reverence recommends him to me.

If he is a saint *oret pro nobi:* [let him pray for us]; but how can I allow him to hear confessions? Let him, I beg you, submit to an examination on all questions of Moral Theology, or at least, find out whether he has ever heard confessions, what he has studied, at least whether he knows enough to hear the confessions of children. But afterwards these children will grow up and will meet with difficulties; and if the confessor is ignorant, he will commit a thousand errors, and I shall then have to render an account to God. Enough; please let me know your opinion.

I bless you. I again recommend to you the exercises for the association of young women. As for the rules of the congregation, I will send them to you later on.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 398.

To the Same.

He forbids monthly collections in the confraternities.

(*Read at once what is placed last.*)

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, January 22, 1763.

As for the rule for the gentlemen, I have already sent them; I will afterwards speak about the contributions that are to be paid.

As regards the rules for the congregation of young women, I have marked in the book "The Exercises of the Mission;" that I have sent, the page where an abridgment is to be found, is, I think, page 194, if I mistake not.

This book I have sent you, because it also contains all that regards the congregation of priests and the association of young women. But you have not written to me that you have received it; see who has it, and make him give it to you.

In reference to the rules for the association of young men, I send you this paper, or rather sketch, hurriedly written. You may afterwards arrange it and put it in better order.

Let us now come to the point about giving contributions.

I should have liked to suppress in all the congregations of my diocese the monthly contributions, and now you wish to introduce it into the congregations which you are establishing! I am an old man and while going through the country giving missions, I have seen the disorders that arise from these monthly payments. Do you wish to establish them? You will see what will happen: a good number of the associates pay their dues in the beginning; then they begin to relax; and as soon as an associate is four or five months in arrears, he will no more be seen.

This is what happens in many places, and will also happen here.

This is not all. If you establish the monthly contributions, you establish thereby a fixed income; to do this you would have to ask the approbation of the royal Chamber; and this approbation of rules you could not obtain for less than forty ducats.[1]

Another consideration. With monthly contributions, it may easily happen that an associate when dying may bequeath something to the congregation. And as soon as the congregation begins to have revenues it will become a nursery of hell. How many similar congregations in the kingdom lead entire families to eternal perdition, because of the administration of revenues! Hence I absolutely wish that the congregation should have no income either fixed or adventitious.

When the members of the congregation are animated with good dispositions, they will know how to provide for the necessary expenses with the alms that will be collected every Sunday. It will be sufficient if every one gives a *grain*. But in these beginnings it will be necessary to impose a personal tax in order to fit up the place, to adorn the altar, etc.; but for the present it is sufficient for them to begin somewhere.

Afterwards, they will no doubt have some remuneration to offer to the spiritual Father, and will provide for his other wants. If they have a good intention, everything will be done at Frasso, as is already done at Sant' Agata, at Arienzo, and here at Airola. He that has greater devotion will give more, and will gain so much more at the present time and in future for the good that he does for himself and for others. But I repeat, I do not wish to hear anything more about revenues or monthly contributions, or of the appointment of a Superior or Prior.

[1] 170 frs.

I conclude by giving you my blessing.

I just now received a letter from the syndic of Durazzano, who writes to me that he has heard that Durazzano alone would receive twelve Fathers, besides those that go to Cervino and Forchia. I have answered him that this cannot be true, since for Durazzano only seven or eight Fathers are necessary.

I beg your Reverence to speak of this to Father Superior and to send me word, because I have had beds prepared only for seven or eight Fathers. If Father Superior should then have any superfluous subjects of which he could dispose, he would do me a favor by sending them to S. Agnese near Arienzo; but I should wish to be informed at once of this arrangement, in order to make the necessary preparations.

I again bless you.

Yours very truly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved at Piacenza in the archives of the "Consorzio della salute delle anime" (Conservatory for the salvation of souls), erected in the parish church of S. Paolo Apostolo.

LETTER 399.

To the Same.

Means of assuring the fruits of the mission.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

DURAZZANO, [January] 29, 1763.

I have received your letter and have spoken to Don Giuseppe Jorio. *Gloria Patri* for the good that has been done at Frasso, especially for the confraternity of gentlemen that has been established there and for the congregation

of the priests! I am expecting the petition [1] and I will forward it to Jorio.

As for the congregation of young men, here is my answer: Write to Canon D. Carlo Mosiello, to take charge of it; he will thereby effect a great deal of good. But what I recommend to you most is the association (not to call it congregation of young women); an instruction could be given them every Sunday, joining to it as D. Giuseppe Jorio would like to have, an instruction once a month for the married women.

Thank in my name Don Francesco Brancone for having offered to serve without pay the association for gentlemen. Tell him that I do not force him to accept this charge, because I have no right to force him; he should assume it through mere charity; but I recommend it to him, I beg him as much as I can, and I hope that he will not say no. I write this letter in haste. Tell Canon Mosiello as well as Canon Brancone that I do not write to them specially, because I am quite unwell here at Durazzano, suffering from catarrh of the chest; but if they wish me to write to them specially, I will write to ask them to perform for me this act of charity.

I rejoice very much to hear that the controversy between Signor Ilario, etc., has come to an end.

In regard to the hour of making the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, I know not what to say. Speaking in general, I think that Don Giuseppe Jorio is right. When the visit is made early only a few can be present. On the other hand your Reverence says that if it is made at a late hour, it will not be frequented. Let us arrange it thus: now that fervor reigns among the people, let us begin to have it late, at an hour when the people can return from the fields; and let us see how this will succeed. If then we see that at this

[1] The petition concerning the aggregation of the Congregation of priests to the Work of Father Pavone.

late hour neither the people from the country nor those living in the place attend to the visit, we can have it earlier.

Moreover, I have ordained that in every part of the diocese the visit should be made late about the hour of the *Ave Maria*.[1] At Sant' Agata it was also at an early hour, but then it was found out by experience that when it was fixed at nightfall, the people attended.

We must, however, be convinced that if in the beginning many people come, we shall afterwards see the number diminishing. Then it will be necessary for us not to become discouraged and to continue with those that come. Enough: in spring when I come for the visitation, we shall arrange these things better.

As for the scandals that some fear if the visit to the Blessed Sacrament is made at a late hour, Jorio is right in saying that this is a subject that should not be considered.

I thank you and praise you for all that you have done to promote the spiritual welfare of your parish, especially for the activity that you have shown during the mission and for the anxiety exhibited by you to have the mission given. Those parish priests that are desirous of having missions show thereby that they have the true spirit of Jesus Christ.

I regret that your Reverence has so much to suffer from infirmities; but I hope that Jesus Christ will give you the needed strength for my own consolation and for the good of the parish, since I see that you are alone, or nearly so in taking care of it.

This last reason induces me to recommend to you above all, the Moral conference; attend to it well so that we may be able to confer Orders upon some good subject, and come thus to your assistance.

Don Giuseppe Jorio would like to have the conference every day; but he that asks too much, will afterwards

[1] About six o'clock in the evening.

receive nothing. For myself I am satisfied if the conference is given two or three times a week; it should however be given at least twice a week, exclusively of the day on which a case of conscience is presented.

Please then encourage those young ecclesiastics to study well in the mean time, so that when I come to make the visitation I may be able to promote several of them. During the visitation we shall have the exercises of the spiritual renewal by celebrating a novena of the Blessed Virgin with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; and I will myself preach in my familiar way.

I bless you and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 400.

To Mgr. Antonio Puoti,[1] Archbishop of Amalfi.

He recommends a young man to him.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 12, 1763.

Your Grace knows that the giving of a recommendation is a thing that cannot be refused.

Don Pietro Cimafonte, who was the architect of my seminary and who also is now building the church at Arienzo, has written to me to recommend to you the affair about the benefice to which the son of Don Domenico Parascandolo aspires; I recommend him *terminis habilibus*.[2]

I recommend myself to the prayers of your Grace, and I

1 Antonio Puoti was born at Arienzo April 25, 1716; he was made Archbishop of Amalfi November 22, 1758, and there he died with the reputation of a great servant of God, after having governed that church during the space of thirty-seven years.

2 *In the desired terms.* — A very equivocal expression indicating an act of pure condescension.

expect you in spring without fail for the consecration of the church [the cathedral of Sant' Agata].[1]

Kissing devotedly your hand, I remain

Yours very respectfully

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of D. Francesco Ingenito, Canon of the cathedral.

LETTER 401.

To Don Matteo Migliore, Parish Priest at S. Maria a Vico.

Zeal of the saint to remove a public scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 13, 1763.

I have heard with much pain of the scandal given by the Neapolitan woman who lives in the house of Angelo Carfora.

I beg your Reverence to tell said Angelo in my name that he must make that woman leave *as soon as possible;* otherwise I shall make him drive her away, or I shall secure an order for her imprisonment; this will bring great shame upon him and his whole house.

I have nothing else to say. I bless you and remain,

Yours very affectionately, and devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] In his first report to the Sacred Congregation of the Council the saint speaks thus: "Cathedralis ecclesia est sub titulo B. Mariæ Virginis in cœlum assumptæ, et consecratione decorata fuit anno 1763, subjacetque juri metropolitano Beneventano." (The cathedral is under the title of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin; it was consecrated in 1763, and is subject to the metropolitan of Benevento.)

LETTER 402.

To the Same.

He asks him to ratify an agreement made with the Dominican Fathers.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 18, 1763.

I hear that some difficulty arose between you, the Reverend parish priests,[1] when there was question of making an agreement with the Dominican Fathers.

I should like to know what is the difficulty, because I should very much regret to have this controversy brought up again, as by it God would gain nothing, and hell would gain much, as it has already gained much thereby.

If the archpriest of S. Andrea does not wish to join in the settlement, he will finally be left to follow up his pretensions by himself; but I should be greatly pleased if you, the parish priests, and especially the parish priest of S. Nicola, would come to some agreement.

Nothing else. I bless your Reverence and your companion Don Vincenzo to whom I recommend myself, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

1 At S. Maria a Vico there were two parish priests, Don Matteo Migliore and D. Vincenzo Mauro; there was also a convent of the Dominican Fathers. The controversy between the clergy of Arienzo and the Fathers is spoken of in the following letter.

LETTER 403.

To the Same.

The same subject. — Refutation of an objection.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 24, 1763.

After you have consoled me with your answer, in which you tell me that you and your companion are ready to carry out the agreement made with the Dominican Fathers, and that if the Archpriest of Arienzo does not wish to take part in it, he should remain alone to litigate, I received the information that the said archpriest is trying certain means to divert you from your intention by saying that you, the parish priests, all form one body.

After hearing this, I wrote him a very strong letter, so that he might conform to my opinion and to that of others; because I am not concerned about the Fathers but about removing the cause of so many sins and disorders which have hitherto disturbed so many families. This is a matter that gives but little glory to God and merely amounts to a trifle which I think will never be carried out as the Fathers will not go so far as the archpriest pretends. Rather will they let the members of the confraternity themselves take charge of the dead, as has been ordered by the king; and if this is done, what advantage will be derived? Nothing else would then be the result than that the corpses would be accompanied by the parish priest and four of the brethren.

Finally, I have also written to him that if he wished to litigate, he might do so alone, but that he should leave off instigating others; and I have declared to him that he would thereby cause me twofold displeasure.

What does this mean, *All the parish priests constitute one body?* Do they perhaps form a Chapter or the members of a Community? Or should you perhaps be its

subordinate? Every parish priest has his own parish, possesses his own distinct rights and has nothing to do with the archpriest. This whole affair has greatly disturbed me.

I beg your Reverence to let me know how this matter stands; but I desire above all that you and your companion should not listen to the archpriest or give up your first opinion.

I bless you, and thank you for your joining me in my opinion.

Yours very affectionately and devotedly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 404.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He asks for a Father to aid him in certain labors.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 28, 1763.

I have received your letter of the 19th of March. Cardinal Spinelli thanks me very much for the mission promised for Acquaformosa and he anxiously awaits the opening. I shall write to the President that Fathers Mazzini and Gaiano will remain there for fifteen days.

As for Father Maione, what your Reverence has told me caused me great anxiety; for I need an able Father who can preach, give the exercises, attend to the examinations, and counsel me in the difficulties and scruples which beset me every day. I am surrounded by troubles on all sides. As it is God's will, it is also my will. However, I do not wish to keep any one here by force and against his will, for that would give me great pain.

Father Gallo would be a good man, but his health is

poor; moreover, he is melancholy, so a month might not elapse before he would write to you in a worse strain than has done Father Maione.

I can think of no other Father. Father Caione is Rector; I understand that Father Picone is going to Girgenti; Father Strina is not suited for the task. The others are too young. Father Cimino, too, is Rector. Perhaps you may think of some one to propose to me, for I am entirely at a loss whom to choose.

Besides, I have spoken to Father Maione; I told him I did not wish to keep him against his will. He confessed to me that he expressed to your Reverence a desire to go to stay at one of our houses; but he says he will remain willingly to help, as long as it is the will of God for him to do so.

Yet I shall not employ him in my business troubles or in other profane matters, but solely in preaching, hearing confessions and in similar spiritual affairs. I see that this whole affair was simply a temptation to disturb both him and me. He tells me that he will remain with pleasure. Well let us see, but meanwhile let your Reverence look out for a suitable subject to assist me in case Father Maione should grow tired, for I do not wish to have this additional pain. But I do not think that there are any others with the exception of Fathers Caione, Picone and Cimino, who can take Father Maione's place.

May the divine will be ever done! but I have felt this blow very keenly.

I bless your Reverence and all the others.

BROTHER ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

[*P. S.*] When you have a good opportunity encourage Father Maione to help me willingly, for I am a poor old man, full of scruples and anxiety; tell him, too, that he is certainly doing the will of God and, besides, a great act

of charity; besides he pleases me, leads a retired life, is a source of edification, counsels me, helps me in preaching, in examinations, and holds himself aloof from business matters. It is hard to find another outside of Caione and Cimino. Tell him he must remain *with a good will*, for it would be better for him to leave me, if he remains against his will, as he would then give me more pain than assistance.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 405.

To Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli.

He recommends to him a young Conventual who goes to Rome for a *concursus*.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

SANT' AGATA DE' GOTI, April 6, 1763.

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Sir: Although I have no claims to your benevolence, yet I dare appeal to your kindness in favor of a member of your venerable Order. There is question of Father Giuseppe de Angelis, bachelor of theology, of the convent of Montella, in the province of Naples. He is a native of this place and goes to Rome to take part in a *concursus* of the college.[1]

The young man, whom I have the honor of recommending to your Eminence, is in possession of science as well as virtue; you may convince yourself of this by the references which he can show you. As for myself, I have taken the liberty of writing to you in his favor principally

[1] This is the college or convent of the Twelve Apostles. There the Franciscan Conventuals conferred the theological degrees on the subjects of their Order, and these degrees were greatly sought after on account of the importance that was attached to them. Cardinal Ganganelli was probably the President of the *concursus*.

for the reason that his monastery needs a subject who is capable. Situated in an important place, well established, and very much devoted to their Seraphic Patriarch, whose habit it possesses, this convent is nevertheless deprived of good subjects, and has been so for a long time. Hence the fervor of the people of the place and of that of the surrounding villages is beginning to cool.

I therefore trust that your Eminence will kindly consider my request and acquiesce in the wishes of my client. The municipality of Montella will be delighted, and I myself will ever feel obliged to you after receiving so remarkable a favor. I repeat: in soliciting this favor, I seek only the glory of God and the well-being of religion.

Believe me to be entirely at your service, and humbly prostrate at your feet I respectfully kiss your sacred purple, I remain,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

[*P. S.*] Your Eminence: I regard the favor asked as if I had already received it; for the subject whom I have the honor of presenting to you is absolutely necessary to the convent.

After the original in possession of Marquis Gaetano Ferrajolo who kindly sent a copy of it to Father Reuss, Redemptorist.

LETTER 406.

To Don Giulio Marocco,[1] Parish Priest at Piana di Caiazzo.

He asks him to aid him in stopping a public scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA DE' GOTI, April 27, 1763.

(*Confidential letter.*)

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I must ask a favor of your Reverence. There is a certain profligate widower named Don Giuseppe Rainone here at Sant' Agata, who has these five years been holding an illicit intercourse with a married woman, Lisabetta Conti.

I obtained through the President of Montefusco an order from the king forbidding this intercourse as well to the man as to the woman. Now I have very strong reasons for suspecting that the said Don Giuseppe has again brought that woman to Caiazzo, where he formerly kept her.

This is the favor I hope to obtain from you: try to find out secretly whether Don Giuseppe is keeping that woman near or at Caiazzo.

He owns a farm with some buildings at Piana; it yields about seventy measures [*tomoli*[2]] of grain. He is also the owner of another farm on the mountain, and holds a vineyard near the monastery of the *Riformati;* these lands came to him through his wife who is dead; she was of the house of Melchiorre, and was related to Baron Bigenti. Moreover, he owns a small house in the town of Caiazzo.

He keeps the concubine in one of these three places, most probably in one of the country places, I beg you to

1 Don Giulio Marocco had spent five years in our Congregation, but he was obliged on account of his health to leave in 1740 without having made profession. See preceding volume Letter 49 page 111.

2 The *tomolo* is equal to 55 litres, a litre being about 2 American pints.

find out something certain about the matter, and to let me know through the carrier from whom you will receive this letter. It will be a great service to God to break this chain which is dragging so many souls to hell.

I beg you to hasten and to inform me as soon as possible; but if you cannot at once clear up the matter, write to me as soon as you have learned anything more definite.

I am not writing to the bishop,[1] as it would be lost time. I write to you, for you are filled with zeal and can do away with this evil.

I shall tell the Brother [Francesco Tartaglione] whom I keep at Naples, to go from time to time to the place where the carrier or courier whom you send is staying; through him I await your answer. If we succeed in finding out where the woman is kept, we have won the case.[2]

I recommend myself to your prayers and beg to subscribe myself, etc.

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] My dear Don Giulio, I recommend as strongly as possible this affair, for it will redound to the glory of God; but it might be good to employ a few trusty spies to discover the hiding place of that woman. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the original preserved in the diocese of Caiazzo.

1 The Bishop of Caiazzo was Mgr. Giuseppe Antonio Piperni.

2 Elisabetta Conti was banished from the lands of the Duke of Maddaloni. After eleven years she returned and seeing her conversion the saint assigned her a monthly allowance. See letter of September 3, 1774.

LETTER 407.

To Father Andrea Villani, at a Mission in Cirignola.

Solicitude of the saint for his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, April 29, 1763.

You may imagine, my dear Father, the pain that I felt when I heard of the accident which you had with the wagon, and of which you have been the victim. Unfortunate or rather fortunate accident; for in all these things may the will of God be always done!

I beg you to inform me by way of Benevento how you are getting on; be careful to use all possible precautions.

I have recommended you in a special manner to our Lord, and I conclude in always repeating: *May the will of God be done!*

Believe me, Reverend Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 408.

To Marquis Granito, Director of the Customs.

He solicits a favor for a poor woman unjustly punished.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, August 1, 1763.

I have learned with great pain that a very poor woman of Arienzo, named Grazia Castauro was arrested near S. Agata and conducted to the Maddaloni prison, because she was found with a half *rotolo* [1] of powder which she had

1 The *rotolo* equal to 671 grammes; 1 gramme being about 15 grains avoirdupois or troy.

received from a priest of the same place, and which she was carrying together with a letter to a priest of Sant' Agata. Although she showed a receipt from the royal contractor that the powder had been sold by him to that priest, the poor creature was nevertheless sent to prison for eleven days to suffer from hunger while she is in the most pitiable condition. Like her husband she is what is called a carrier making a living by carrying letters.

Moved, therefore, with pity for the misery of this woman, who is moreover a person of good character, I beg you to be so good as to release her from prison. I assure you that you will thereby perform a work of mercy, very pleasing to God, the more so as I hold for certain that she is suffering innocently, as she is not capable of smuggling; this can be proved by the receipts that her husband will present you.

Hoping that you will grant me this favor, I remain full of esteem,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After a copy.

LETTER 409.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Good disposition of the Council of the Regency towards the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, August 5, 1763.

I ask you not to forget to send here Father [Giovanni] Lauria to settle about going to Sicily.

Thanks be to God I feel much better; I bless you all.

In a visit paid by Father Caione to the Prince of Ardore, the conversation fell upon the royal decree concerning

Iliceto. Among other things the prince said: "I have taken an interest in your Institute, and what was done was done as an act of justice; for the members of the Council of the Regency know perfectly what good your Congregation does either in the kingdom or in Sicily." The Council of the Regency therefore knows that we are established in Sicily. I greatly rejoice at this news. The prince added that the Council had a high idea of our Institute.

BROTHER ALFONSO, etc.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 410.

To His Secretary, Don Felice Verzella, at Arienzo.

Various commissions. — Remark in regard to the examiner of a work of the saint.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, August 15, 1763.

I answer your letter, and I first of all rejoice that your illness is not so severe as has been described to me.

With God's grace I feel much better and am nearly cured of my troubles in my chest and limbs.

To-morrow I shall go to Cava to remain for three or four days, although it may be that I have to go to Naples because I have come across an examiner, Father Capobianco, who in five pages of the little book composed for the diocese has made six difficulties. Hence it will be necessary for me to secure another; and in this case I will be obliged to send for you.

Giacomo di Cervo has called upon me, and I answered him that I would not interefere, and that I refer all things

to you, to Ciardullo,[1] and to D. Gioacchino. You must, therefore, attend to this business.

Write to the parish priest [D. Matteo] Migliore that as to the building I have already arranged with another builder, who cannot come this month, but will come in September. He cannot at present leave his work.

D. Pietro Cimafonte [2] said that we should by no means think of furnishing beams, ropes, etc., for the scaffoldings because it would be a useless expense. Master Giovanni should therefore remain quiet, if he does not wish to furnish the beams himself. Write all about this to the administrators.

As to the two or three thousand ducats given by devout persons, we shall speak of the matter when I come to Arienzo.

I return to the Vicar-General the petition of the Archpriest of Frasso; I have already written what he should do.

Write to the Archpriest of Frasso that I will recommend to God the affair of his niece; but for the present we must wait a little while. We shall see whether she perseveres in her design of becoming a nun at Frasso.

In regard to the semi-annual income from the benefice of Santa Margarita, tell him that I am satisfied if he applies it to the cemetery.

I have received a letter from Don Vittorio Giacinto.

[1] D. Agostino Ciardullo, agent of the fief of Bagnoli, which belonged to the Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[2] Pietro Cimafonte, a very great friend of St. Alphonsus, was an excellent Christian and a very good architect. The saint who had used him for all the buildings of the Congregation, also employed him to build the new church at S. Maria a Vico. It is this church for which devout persons had offered two or three thousand ducats, and of which mention is made in this letter.

Tell him that I do not know when I shall go home, perhaps in September, but I do not know on what day.

I bless you.

Yours very affectionately and devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 411.

To the Same.

Course to be adopted in regard to a monastery.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, August 27, 1763.

In regard to the contractor Rossi, that is understood.

If ever those old nuns write to me, in order not to add fuel to the flame while I am at a distance, I shall answer them that when I go to Arienzo I will see what is to be done. I will also say to them that Father Master will no more go to the monastery to hear confessions.

Moreover, assure Don Francesco and the Sisters that I will never more send him to the monastery. It will however be better for you to say this only to Don Francesco, because if it is said to the Sisters all Arienzo will know it. In such things, by taking time, the fire will be extinguished little by little.

In regard to the grain from Cervo that is understood.

As for the affair of the Vicar-General, I have already written to the Nuncio.

In regard to going home I shall wait till the weather

grows cooler, and sickness in that place has a little abated.

Yours very affectionately and devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 412.

To the Same.

Various recommendations on different subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 5, 1763.

Master Matteo the contractor whom I have sent you is ready to undertake the work; but we must have here a copy of the contract which was made with the contractor of Maddaloni. Try to get it as soon as you can, and send it to me, because a better contractor we could not have; so Don Pietro Cimafonte says.

Write then to Don Gioacchino that in regard to the sale of the grain he should act as he thinks best.

I hear that complaints have been made about me. Tell their author, if you should ever know him, that I am ready to make him a beautiful present if he obtains for me the power of resigning my episcopate.

Do not forget to take to Airola those ten *tomoli* [1] of beans which I have given in charge of Don Giovanni Mango.

Send me as I wrote you the note about the public market. I salute the Vicar-General and remain,

Yours very affectionately and devotedly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[1] Equal to 5.55 hectolitres; 1 hectolitre = about 2 bushels.

[*P. S.*] I have heard that the Dean is dead.

As regards the vacant canonicate, let it be known that I have promised it to Domenico di Cesare, professor of humanities, who is well deserving of it; I do not wish to be assailed by solicitations.

No letter has come from Rome; it may easily have happened that the Sacred Congregation has not considered the application made to it against the Vicar-General. Tell the latter to be of good cheer, the more so since the Nuncio has written to me lately without mentioning a word about it.

I bless all.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 413.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Smallness of the revenue of the episcopate of Sant' Agata.

September 25, 1763.

. . . . . As for the revenue of four thousand ducats, would to God we could get two thousand and two hundred, for I have suppressed here a certain number of revenues which were demanded, and about which I would have a very reasonable scruple to reclaim them.

The chancery brings in little or nothing, for I think it the best alms to forego the marriage fees, especially when the parties are poor and there is danger of sin.

I hoped to free myself from debts this year, but on account of this bad year I have not been able to ask for much; I do not know whether I shall succeed in quieting my mind; perhaps it will be necessary to wait for another year. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxix.

LETTER 414.

To the Same.

He asks him to give the spiritual exercises to the *Rocchetines* [1] of Arienzo.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 21, 1763.

(*Confidential letter.*)

My dear Don Andrea: I have entire confidence that you will go to give the exercises to the monastery of the Nunziata of Arienzo.

This is a monastery which I cannot call bad, but the right spirit does not reign there, as if the nuns never had the exercises as they should be given. Either your Reverence will do me this favor, or you will please send Father Caione; yet I should prefer your Reverence, because some one is needed who speaks powerfully, especially on the eternal truths, and who at the same time uses gentleness and caution: for the nuns say that I have a bad opinion of them. I therefore fear that they will take offence at all that our Fathers say as having been inspired by me.

The point is that your Reverence would have to come in the month of November, because the nuns have asked me for an extraordinary confessor, and therefore I should wish that the exercises be given to them at the same time, as they will afterwards be of some benefit to them on account of the circumstances under which they are given.

I send you a messenger, to have an answer from you, because the nuns are anxious to have a certain Capuchin Father for their extraordinary confessor; they will then probably ask me to have him preach for them, and I will

[1] Regular Canonesses of St. Augustine, so called from the rochet which they wear.

not be able to refuse. In this case the exercises would not be given.

I bless you, and remain,

Yours devotedly

BROTHER ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

[*P. S.*] As a last resource you may send Father Fiocchi; but I repeat: I would rather have your Reverence. I should like you to take another Father with you to assist you, and if you wish a Brother for your convenience you are free to take him with you.

After the original in possession of D. Cesare Ruggeri, Beneficiary of the Basilica Liberiana in Rome.

LETTER 415.

To the Same.

He fixes the time when he is to preach the aforesaid retreat.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, October 29, 1763.

I have received your letter, and I must say that at present, that is, from the 18th to the 20th of November it will be impossible to give the retreat in the monastery. During this time, in fact, all the relatives of the religious come to sojourn at Arienzo. To wish to constrain the nuns to close their parlor and put them into retreat would be a sheer loss. They might moreover plainly declare that they do not wish to have their retreat at this time, and if we forced them, they would profit little by the retreat. It has, besides, given them great pleasure to hear that it is you who is to give the retreat; and Don Francesco Puoti [1] told me that they were anxious to have you after the praise that

[1] Don Francesco Paolo Puoti left Rome every year to spend the autumn at Arienzo, his native place.

he gave you. You can therefore not go to Arienzo till the relatives of the religious have departed.

The nuns would wish to begin their retreat on November 27, the first Sunday of Advent. You must then come eight or ten days after the date that you indicated to me or advance the date of your arrival. However, do not come before November 20, the last Sunday after Pentecost.

One can, besides, think of the novena of Christmas; for at this time the church is occupied. Now it is in the church that you are to preach after dinner; and in the morning in the parlor.

Arrange things as you think best; but at all events come on one of the two dates of which I have spoken. I send you a messenger that you may not come on Monday as you intended to do; for you would make a useless journey.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 416.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He asks a favor for the same nuns.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, October 29, 1763.

I lately explained to your Excellency the inconveniences to which the nuns of the SS. Nunziata at Arienzo are subject: they need more room; for as I told you they have been living for a long time in narrow quarters, so that many have to remain two in a room. I have already spoken to an architect as to what is to be done; and he has found out that an extension could be made only on one

side. Your Excellency would then have to concede to them the wall that encloses the land, and the little lane that passes between the monastery and the public street near the wall; this would make a perfect square.

Renewing, therefore, my most humble petition that this holy and necessary design be carried out, I beg your Excellency to give orders for a public meeting, authorizing it with your protection, without which I do not see how the affair could be settled; hence I recommend it to you most warmly.

Convinced that your Excellency will grant the request, I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 417.

To His Brother D. Ercole de Liguori.

He expresses to him reasons why he is moved to do away with the carriage, and asks him to look for a purchaser.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, November 28, 1763.

Your fear on the subject of the carriage, I say, is certainly a temptation of the devil in order to disturb you and me.

I take counsel in doubtful things, but not in things that are certain; now I hold for certain that God does not wish that I should continue this useless expense, for I rarely go out in summer, and much more rarely, do I go out at other seasons. When I must go out, I shall find a carriage and horses by paying for them; but then twenty or thirty ducats will be sufficient for me.

I am old with one foot in the grave; I am burdened with debts; I should incur many expenses necessary for the glory of God, and I am grieved to death that I cannot incur them, because I must first pay the debts that I owe you and the

seminary. I beg you, therefore, not to trouble me any more about this affair, otherwise I will no longer answer your letters.

I had hoped that my first letter would have quieted you. You already know that when I take a resolution after having considered it I will never depart from it; hence in future do not annoy me any longer about this matter.

If then you do not wish to do me the favor to sell the mules and the carriage at a suitable time, as I cannot throw them into the street, I will give them in charge of another, and I will get rid of them at any price.

Your letter has caused me pain. It is insupportable to me to see the mules remaining a whole year in the stable and the coachman in the tavern, while the poor are crying for mercy, and I have nothing to give them.

If Mgr. Testa were to hear me, he would say that I am right; but I should have to tell him all.

I embrace you, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 418.

To the Same.

He thanks him and manifests to him the bad state of his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, December 13, 1763.

My dear Brother: I thank you for the apples that you have sent me. Now I do not find any other sweet things than this little box that has come to me from Donn' Alvina.[1] As I received it, so I send it to you.

[1] This was a convent in Naples. The nuns were of noble family and followed the Rule of St. Benedict.

As for the carriage, I am glad that you will take it; as for the price, do as you please.

It will however be difficult for me to go to Naples. To do so I would have to have the ill luck of receiving an invitation from the government; then, in such a case I could easily send my Vicar or some Canon; for I have the excuse of being old, sick and of not going out.

Kind regards to Signora Donna Marianna,[1] and I embrace you.

Believe me,

Your most affectionate brother ALFONSO.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 419.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He begs him to prevent a public scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, December 18, 1763.

I need your help in order to remove a great scandal that exists at Arienzo.

At that place there is a certain young woman, named Maria Librera, who last year, on account of the scandal that she gave, had been ordered to be banished; but because she had recourse to me, and made so many promises that she would change her life, I prevented the execution of banishment, and from time to time gave her some assistance as well as I could. But now I hear from many persons that she has returned to her old ways and is worse than before, and keeps company with many men.

I therefore beg you to write to the governor to make inquiries, and if the fact is found to be as has been stated,

1 Donna Maria Anna Capano Orsini, wife of D. Ercole.

to have her imprisoned, and the order of punishment renewed; because I now see that there is no other remedy for removing this pest from Arienzo.

I hope that you will without fail grant this request. I for my part do not know what more I can do; only your Excellency can remedy the evil; if you do not help me, I at least shall not be guilty before God.

Please accept the expression of my very humble respects and perfect submission with which I have the honor to be

Your Excellency's very humble,
devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 420.

To Father Donato Melaccio, in the House at Pagani.

He exhorts him courageously to accept death.

[Beginning of the year 1764.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

My dear Son: God knows the pain that I have felt from the very beginning of your illness; but I have resigned myself to the will of God who has thus disposed things.

And so you should also be resigned, and should abandon yourself entirely to the arms of your good God, who wishes to take you from this so dangerous sea of the world, being anxious to save you.

Be consoled and be sure of your eternal salvation, because you die in the Congregation. Poor men are they who have been with us, and who die outside of the Congregation! Of what use is life if one does not die a good death in God's grace?

I am sure of your good death, and so what more do you

seek? What can be grander than to be able to put an end to the time of committing sin and to escape the danger of losing God?

When therefore the thought of death should afflict you, revive your confidence and resignation and say: *God wishes me to leave the world, it will be the best thing for me.* Who knows whether if you become well, your head would not be turned, as the heads of so many have been turned, and you would die outside of the Congregation, and God knows in what state!

Rejoice! God wishes to save you. If he calls you to another life, do not omit to recommend me to the Madonna, to whom I will recommend you before and after your death if yours will be before mine. But if you go before me into eternity, I shall try to follow you soon. And so I hope that within a short while I shall see you again in a place of safety where we shall love God without the danger of ever being separated.

I now beg you to pay attention not to lose anything that you may offer up to God as well as in regard to the pains that you suffer on account of your illness, as in regard to the neglect that you may at times experience.

When you find yourself more left alone and more abandoned, then draw yourself closer to God because he will surely assist you. Let there always be in your mouth these names: *My dearest Jesus; my dearest Mamma Mary*, so that you may die while saying these words.

Yes, I absolve you from every fault that you have committed against the vows. Take the remedies that they give you, but let every desire and your entire will be only to do what God wishes. Do what you have written to me, finish your life in obedience, because in this way you cannot err.

Finally, I send you a thousand blessings. Till shortly we must meet again in Paradise! May God's blessing rest upon you. Amen. Amen.

I again embrace and bless you. Till we meet again in blessed eternity! [1]

Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 421.

To Mother Saveria Foglia, Prioress of the Monastery at Airola.

He grants her a permission.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, January 11, 1764.

Very dear Mother Superior: — I fully understand from your letter as well as from the information given me by the Signor [vicar forane] D. Giovanni Mango what you so much desire. I therefore give you my blessing together

[1] Father Donato Melaccio died April 22, 1764. Born at Calitri July 18, 1732, he entered when a young man the Congregation in which he lived as a boarder for a year and a half before being able to begin his novitiate. He was admitted to profession July 16, 1752. "He then prosecuted his studies with great spiritual and temporal profit. After having become a priest, he applied himself to the office of holy preaching to the great profit of souls. It appeared wonderful how a man of a rather low stature could have so loud a voice, which he caused to resound throughout the church, moving the hearts of the most obstinate and hardened sinners. But while making such efforts in preaching he was seized in the pulpit itself with a hemorrhage which increased more and more in the course of time. He was always cheerful, because he was dying for the love of a Redeemer who had given for us his blood and his life. He finally breathed forth his beautiful soul, April 22, 1764 at the house at Pagani, where he was buried." Thus Father Giuseppe Landi in his chronicles.

with my consent to your Community to use veils of stamin instead of linen; hence be without scruple.

Recommend me to God, and I bless you all.

Believe me, dear Mother,

Yours most devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 422.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

Evils caused by scarcity. — Appeal to the charity of the prince.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, January 26, 1764.

Your Excellency should know that we are here in great fear because the want of bread has reached such a point that we are every day in danger of seeing the people rising in revolt; for the inhabitants, even with money in their hands, do not find any grain or bread to buy.

The municipal council, therefore, has come to me to beg me to supplicate your Excellency, — this I now do — to order your grain, which is at Sant' Agata, to be reserved for this city.

For myself, I do all that I can to help these poor people. I have already sold the carriage and the mules which I owned, and I also think of going into debt; but I see that I cannot succeed in doing what I wish, and I continually tremble at a revolutionary outbreak, since several times the people have given themselves up to agitation and tumult.

I again entreat your Excellency most earnestly to keep your grain here in order to support your distressed subjects,

who without this aid would be reduced to despair, seeing themselves in extreme necessity.

As for the price of grain, the municipality declares that it does not wish to prejudice the interests of your Excellency, but that price which is regarded as fair will be paid to you.

In case your Excellency is willing to perform this act of charity, as we all hope that you will, be so kind as to inform your agent so as to quiet the agitation that exists among the people.

I have the honor to be with perfect submission and in the sentiments of the most profound respect, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 423.

To Mgr. Domenico Andrea Calvalcanti,[1] Archbishop of Trani.

Difficulties met with in founding a house of the Congregation at Corato.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 9, 1764.

Most Reverend Sir: I received your Grace's most esteemed letter just this morning, and I am writing at once to my companions, and especially to the Vicar-General [Father D. Andrea Villani] according to your request.

But, my dear Monsignor, this case is a difficult one, because the government does not wish that the property of the laity, whether it be the property of individuals or laic chaplaincies, should pass into the hands of ecclesiastics.

[1] Mgr. Cavalcanti of the Theatine Order, born 1698 at Caccurii, diocese of Gerenza, was made Archbishop of Trani, May 12, 1755, and governed this church till the year 1768.

accept the house at Corato, especially to serve you who have honored them with so much affection.

As to our Fathers, they cannot show themselves in this affair, for if they did so, they would only injure it. Hence the petition to the king should be presented by you, and should contain a request that you might keep with you at Corato two or three Fathers (it would be better to say, some missionaries of our association, the authorities not wishing to hear the name *Congregation*), directed by me, for the purpose of assisting you by giving missions in that city and also in your diocese. If you have permission at the beginning for *two or three* Fathers, we may hope that the permission will afterwards be extended.

But the more important point is in regard to the fixed assignment of the income for the chaplaincy, for which, it appears to me it will be impossible to obtain the royal permit. I would rather that nothing be said for the present about the assignment of the chaplaincy, for a foundation would at once be suspected, and everything would be refused. I say *of the chaplaincy*, because as for that which individuals may give, the capital may be given to the archbishop *pro tempore*, with the obligation of presenting the fruits of the capital to the Fathers of the Most Holy Redeemer for the purpose of giving missions.

Kissing most respectfully your Grace's hand, I remain,

Your most devoted and obedient servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I add: But if there is no fixed assignment from the income of the chaplaincy, how will it be possible for our Fathers to take the house at the risk of being driven away every year when there is a change of the governor or of the prefect? The affair, therefore, appears to me to be very hazardous.[1]

[1] In fact, the Archbishop of Trani did not obtain the royal permit, and the foundation was not made.

LETTER 424.

To Don Giuseppe Cervo, Archpriest of Durazzano.

He recommends to him to be more liberal to the poor.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 11, 1764.

I write to you this letter in order to recommend to you almsgiving, because I hear that in this respect you are stingy; you could hardly be so without a scruple, especially in these hard times.

By the grace of God your house has no need of being assisted by what belongs to the Church.

I am overwhelmed with debt; I make no difficulty in these calamitous times to omit paying debts, and I am even thinking of going into another debt in order to help the poor. Durazzano is full of poor people, and the house of the archpriest well knows how to aid them with alms. I recommend them to you, especially in these miserable times. I bless you.

Yours most cordially and affectionately

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata dei Goti.

After a copy.

LETTER 425.

To Father Giuseppe Melchionna.

He imposes upon him a formal obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 11, 1764.

My dear Don Giuseppe: I hear that you are still at Naples. I beg you to commit no more sacrileges;[1] I therefore command you under pain of grievous sin to retire to one of our houses.

It is useless for you to have any one to write to me; for I cannot grant you a dispensation in this way; such an example would be the ruin of others.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 426.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He informs him of a tumult that occurred among the people on account of the famine, so that he might provide for their wants opportunely.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 20, 1764.

I am writing, being yet frightened by what happened yesterday here at Sant' Agata.

I inform your Excellency that in the past week owing to the edict that had been issued that every one who owned grain could sell it at any price, the magistrates inquired of those at Sant' Agata that had grain whether they would

1 This Father, detained by certain affairs at Naples prolonged his stay there, and when re-called by Father Villani, wrote the latter an impertinent letter. The saint tells him that on account of his disobedience he is guilty of sacrilege in celebrating the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

give it at eight ducats or at eight ducats and a half; but all that they could obtain from the owners of grain was that they would be willing to give the grain to the inhabitants at nine ducats [1] a sack; and according to this price they also believed that they could procure the grain from your Excellency.

In order that the inhabitants might, therefore, have the means of procuring the grain needed for their support till the harvest, they thought of raising the price of the *rotolo* of bread from four grains and a half to five *grana* and five *cavalli*;[2] a price which is low enough for these hard times when grain is sold as high as ten ducats per sack;[3] the more so since in other places bread is sold at seven and eight *grana* the *rotolo.*

And so the counsellors thought of affording relief to the public by assuming a thousand ducats as a part of a debt, and borrowing three hundred ducats from the chapels; for this I myself co-operated, so that they might procure this money for the solace of the poor people.

In the mean time the counsellors begged me to dispose the people in my sermons so that they might receive peaceably the news of the raising of the price of the bread.

On Saturday I tried to do so in the best manner that I could; but yesterday the people rebelled, showing their great fury; they rang the alarm-bells; they even went in their madness to the house of the syndic, perhaps with the intention of demolishing it, and maltreated counsellor Moscarelli, crying out that they wished to have the grain at eighteen *carlini* and the bread at four *grana.* The governor, therefore, in order to quiet the tumult of the people whose number had increased from seven to eight hundred persons,

1 38.25 frs.

2 The Neapolitan *rotolo* was equivalent to 891 grammes, and the *grano* (money) valued at 0.045 frs; the *cavallo*, 0.03 c.; the *tomolo* 55.54 litres.

3 42.50 frs. — The silver ducat about equal to the American dollar; the gold ducat of twice the value.

thought it prudent to sell fifty *tomoli* of your Excellency's grain at twenty *carlini* a *tomolo*. This morning they wanted more grain, but it was not given to them.

I have wished to inform your Excellency of all this, so that you might take opportune measures to prevent the repetition of the tumult which, if no remedy is applied, will certainly occur.

Please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be, etc.

[*P. S.*] I add a word. I hear just now that, because the people were agitating till this morning, your Excellency's grain, which was distributed, amounted not only to fifty *tomoli* but to two hundred.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 427.

To Father Fabrizio Cimino,[1] Rector of the House at Pagani.

On what conditions Father Melchionna shall be dismissed.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 21, 1764.

My dear Fabrizio: As to Father Melchionna, I feel sorry for him; but the Father Vicar [Father Andrea Villani]

[1] Father Fabrizio Cimino, born at Gragnano, in the diocese of Lettere, March 29, 1733, was admitted to the novitiate, July 17, 1751, and to profession July 16, the following year, on the feast of the Most Holy Redeemer. He showed from the beginning of his religious life marked ability. Hence he was scarcely thirty years old when he was appointed Rector of the house at Nocera de' Pagani. Having later on become Consultor-General of the Congregation, he was in 1780 implicated with Father D. Angelo Maione in the affair of the *Regolamento* (the mutilated Rule) and thus lost his vocation. In 1798, January 29 he was preconized bishop of Oria; but after a few years he retired to our house at Pagani, where he died March 22, 1818. St. Alphonsus having been beatified in 1817,

remains unmoved. However, I have written to him that I wish to know the opinion of the other Consultors, and at the end of the letter I added my opinion that it is not proper to expel a subject that truly humbles himself.

I have answered Father Melchionna in such a way as to place him between hope and fear. Read the letter that I have written to him, and also endeavor to maintain him in this alternative.

I am not very much afraid of what he does; but what frightens me are the bad maxims that he has written in the interval. The main thing is that he abjures these maxims, and that he really humbles himself. If he acts thus, he will, I hope, not be expelled.

We are here in great fear because of the famine. The day before yesterday there was an uprising, and we fear another on Sunday. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 428.

To Father Giuseppe Melchionna, in the House at Pagani.

He exhorts him to submission and repentance.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[SANT' AGATA], February 21, 1764.

My dear Father Giuseppe: On the one hand your letter has consoled and affected me; on the other hand, what you have done was very wrong by remaining so long out of the Congregation. I know that you have submitted to the Father Vicar [D. Andrea Villani]; but I beg you to address to him another letter in which you continue to

Mgr. Cimino contributed the greater part of the expenses contracted in erecting a chapel in our church at Pagani where the saint's relics are preserved.

humble yourself and to ask his pardon; for really by what you have written to him you have treated him badly. Don Andrea at present fills the office of Superior; your letter was altogether too bold.

I have written to Don Andrea that I wished to know the opinion of the other Consultors on the question of admitting you again to the Congregation or of dismissing you.

If you, however, really submit with your whole heart, and if you tell the truth, do not doubt, God will not permit you to be dismissed. Yet it is not expedient for me to act contrary to the opinion of all the Consultors. You are a devout client of the Blessed Virgin; recommend yourself to this good Mother, and she will console you.

I bless you, and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 429.

To Father Girolamo Ferrara, at Pagani.

His desire to save the vocation of Father Melchionna.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 27, 1764.

My dear Don Girolamo: I have read your letter. I beg you to have patience if you see that I have not yet come to a conclusion. Let us do justice to both parties.

Keep the matter a secret; you may be sure I will not allow Father Melchionna to undergo a penance of one year's novitiate. But, on the other hand, I cannot displease Don Andrea, else he might be induced to resign his charge, saying that I am only making him play the part of a bugbear.

I have written to him as it were accidentally that I wished to know what the Consultors say about Father Melchionna, and that nothing should be done without first informing me, so that we may do what is best, etc. By this means we gain time; then it will devolve on me to diminish the penance and to see that there is fair play.

Keep this a secret, because I do not wish that Don Andrea should know what I now think about the matter. You may speak alone with Father Cimino, but recommend secrecy to him.

I am of opinion that Fathers Mazzini and Margotta [1] will remain inflexible. But let us leave all to God; I hope that in time everything will pass off quietly.

Inform me at once whether it is known that the books from Remondini [2] have reached Naples. My new little book for confessors in the country [3] is finished and has many approbations. I am, however, careful not to let it appear at Naples,[4] nor for a good reason do I think of allowing it to circulate everywhere in this place.

I bless you and remain

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

[1] Fathers Mazzini and Margotta were Consultors-General.

[2] Giuseppe Remondini, a printer of Venice, printed all the works that the saint published.

[3] This book is entitled: "Il confessore diretto per le confessioni della gente di campagna." (The Confessor Instructed for Hearing the Confessions of People in the Country.)

[4] At Naples, the civil government arrogating to itself the right of examining theological works, showed itself very favorable to the opinions of the Jansenists.

LETTER 430.

To Father Fabrizio Cimino.

He requests him to exhort Father Melchionna to submission.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

SANT' AGATA, February 27, 1764.

(*Confidential.*)

I have received your last letter and another letter from Father Melchionna.

I do not answer him, because it is already dark, and I must write in haste. But let him never doubt that as long as he has the good intention to give himself entirely to God and to practise obedience, God will help him. Tell him that he did well to write again to the Father Vicar and that it matters not that he has not yet received an answer.

As for his coming here, I should be very glad; but now it would not be suitable; he may come later on.

In the mean time let him always be humble in his speech, saying that he wishes to submit to every kind of penance. He should recommend himself to the Blessed Virgin, and this good Mother will take care of him.

Your Reverence will please speak to Father Ferrara, to whom I have already written concerning the matter.

Sixty cavalrymen have already come hither on account of the insurrection of which I spoke. During the past days God only knows how much I have suffered; I have not enjoyed sleep for several nights.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ; I bless you all.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 431.

To the Same.

Other advice for saving Father Melchionna's vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 6, 1764.

My dear Don Fabrizio: With all your marks of goodness towards Father Melchionna and all the full powers that you give him you have been doing him great injury.

I have received several fiery letters, notably from Fathers Margotta and Villani; and Father Caione [1] says the same thing. They all say: "What sign of repentance and of submission does Father Melchionna give now, if he continues to do as he does? Of what use will he be to us?"

I beg you, therefore, have him remain in seclusion and humiliation, and encourage him to accept even the novitiate at Santangiolo [2] if Father Villani ordains it. I will afterwards remedy the matter. But he must give some signal mark of repentance; the more so since before this last escapade, he has not been exemplary.

Please give Father Ferrara this letter to read. I bless you and remain

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

[1] Father Caione was also Consultor-General.

[2] The novitiate had been transferred from Iliceto to S. Angelo a Cupolo, November 15, 1762.

LETTER 432.

To Father Giuseppe Melchionna.

He exhorts him to obedience and promises him his mediation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 6, 1764.

I am doing what I can in your favor; but I hear with pain that instead of leading a retired life, of being humble, and of giving signs of repentance and of submission, you are doing just the opposite. It is true that in this your Reverence is not so much in fault as others that have given you too much liberty; but this is something that is obvious to many members of the Congregation, and I have received many complaints about this matter.

Do as I tell you. Lead a retired life; do not give audience either to visitors or to women that wish to see you: and in recreation do not speak, or say only a few words. I beg you, moreover, to submit to all the penances that you receive. Fear nothing; for I shall remedy whatever is excessive. Even if you would be condemned to make another novitiate, submit without repugnance; it will be my care to moderate things.

I know that your health is bad, that you suffer from your head, etc.; but you must show some sensible marks of submission and of obedience; for the others fear that afterwards you would continue to act and to speak as you have done outside of the Congregation; and then, they say, for what purpose does he remain in the Congregation if not to give bad example?

Do as I tell you, and you will succeed.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 433.

To Father Girolamo Ferrara.

Further advice relative to Father Melchionna.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 6, 1764.

I have received two terrible letters, one from Father Margotta and the other, from the Father Vicar; and Father Caione writes to me that he is of the same opinion as they.

They complain that Father Melchionna gives no sign of repentance and that he acts and speaks very freely.

I answered that the Superiors at Pagani are more in fault than Father Melchionna, for they gave him too much liberty. Enough of this; repeat what I wrote to Father Cimino and to Father Melchionna himself; your Reverence will please try to make the latter submit, even though he would have to go to the novitiate at Sant' Angelo, because I will afterwards mitigate the chastisement. All will be well if only he gives signs of obedience and humility.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 434.

To His Brother Don Ercole de Liguori, at Naples.

He consoles him in his trials. — Opinion of the saint as to the cause of the famine.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 11, 1764.

My very dear Brother: I have received your letter in which you inform me of the accident that has befallen Signora Donna Marianna. Since God has permitted it, we must be resigned to his holy will.

I will, however, not omit to recommend your wife to God that it may please him to grant her the grace that is most suitable for her, and in the mean time may you both be of good courage, and may you let the Lord do as he pleases.

Give my regards to Donna Marianna, and tell her not to lose courage.

I have heard with regret of the distress that reigns in the capital, and I tell the truth when I say that this pains me greatly; but as God wills it to be so, may his holy will be always done! Write to me often about this trouble and especially how one may procure grain and how much of it.

In a word, we are all in distress, you at Naples and we here. Let us be resigned to God's holy will, because there is hanging over us another chastisement of God. And I say that God specially chastises the city of Naples, because there are so many there that do not believe in God. God grant that now they may be converted! I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 435.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He implores his protection in favor of two innocent persons.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 19, 1764.

Because of the favor shown by your Excellency, I also begged you to prevent any proceedings from being taken against the poor people of Sant' Agata on account of the riot that had occurred. Now as your Excellency will hear from the governor, both he and the syndic find themselves involved and constrained by the tribunal of Montefuscoli to prosecute the inquiry at their own expense.

I have tried to help them at the trial of Montefuscoli by making the authorities understand that they did not interrupt the examination because they feared to be found guilty, but because I interposed your Excellency's good offices, so that the citizens of Sant' Agata, who had taken part in the tumult, might not suffer; but I effected nothing.

I regret, on the other hand, that the governor and the syndic have for my sake to go into great expense on account of the execution of justice.

I however beg your Excellency if possible to protect them in every way, and I remain with profound respect, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 436.

To Father Girolamo Ferrara.

He asks for some information, and prepares him for sad news.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 20, 1764.

Remondini has sent the books. I beg you to let me know at the first opportunity the price of the *Homo Apostolicus*, as I must get it for my seminarians. Live Jesus and Mary!

With regard to Father Melchionna, I am waiting for an answer to my letter to Father Cimino, as I have already told you; I suspect very strongly that Melchionna will not prove a good subject for our Congregation, and the Congregation should be dearer to you than your nephew.

I bless you and remain

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

[*P. S.*] I hear that not only the Consultors but also the subjects are complaining about this affair; and I cannot oppose the whole Community.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 437.

To Father Fabrizio Cimino.

Zeal of the saint for the defence of the Church.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 28, 1764.

About Father Melchionna I have already written to you the complaints made; I have recommended to you not to lose sight of him, and thus to put him to the test. Moreover

tell him that he should submit himself unreservedly to Don Andrea; for in this way all will be well, and for my part I will plead his cause if it should be necessary.

Tell Father de Meo that I have in my hands a publication from which I have drawn many precious notes against the Jansenists; I will send it to him. But I should like that when there are no missions he would not lose sight of *our friend* Basnage.[1]

The whole Church would receive with joy a refutation of this author. But I hear that Father de Meo has no taste for such a labor.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] Father Alessandro de Meo was a man well-versed in history. It is probable that St. Alphonsus wished him to write a refutation of Basnage de Flottemanville, the author of the following works: 1. "Annales politico-ecclesiastici annorum 645 a Cæsare-Augusto usque ad Phocam;" 2. "De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes historico-criticæ, in quibus Cardinalis Baronii Annales ab A. C. 35, in quo Casaubonus desiit, expenduntur." (1. Politico-Ecclesiastical Annals of 645 years from Cæsar Augustus till the Emperor Phocas; 2. Criticism on the Annals of Cardinal Baronius, to serve as a supplement to that of Casaubonus who left off at the year 35 after Christ.) — An Academia founded at Naples in 1741, by Cardinal Spinelli had undertaken the refutation of these and similar works; we shall see further on what St. Alphonsus says of these essays.

LETTER 438.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He asks him to sustain the rights of the episcopal revenues in favor of poor farmers.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA DE' GOTI, April 3, 1764.

Your Excellency: On the 28th day of March I was informed of the order given by the receiver of Avellino, at the instance of the fiscal agent, that I had to appoint a procurator for the secretary of the administration, Natale di Amato of the *bank* of Gennaro Albano whose name is subscribed to said order. The procurator was to furnish a census of the families of the fief of Bagnoli, which it is understood will impose taxes as if it were a separate and independent fief. I enclose a copy of this order to your Excellency who has the criminal jurisdiction of this fief which is united to that of Sant' Agata.

Having sent for Signor Agostino Ciardullo, who has been for many years agent of said fief, I was told by him that during the time of my predecessor your Excellency had to concern yourself about this affair, especially after a report had been sent in by the above-mentioned Albano. The latter a few years before had visited the hamlet of Bagnoli, and although Signor Ciardullo, with his usual candor, had with the consent of the deputy of the municipality marked out the true boundaries of said hamlet, Albano, either through envy or with the desire of showing how great was its extent, wished to take the census of the whole territory of Reallo; this was also an annex of the fief of S. Agata, consequently depending on your Excellency both for civil and criminal jurisdiction.

I therefore see myself obliged like my predecessor to address myself to your Excellency that you may defend a

cause in which your family is very much interested. I have in this no other ambition than to preserve to the episcopal revenues the moderate income that it has always possessed, and to spare the inhabitants of Bagnoli the burden of taxes. This handful of poor people is in fact absolutely incapable of paying contributions. There are no funds nor any other revenue that can support a municipality; and as to the number of inhabitants, it is also deficient, since the population is reduced to some strange farmers who cultivate the land in places that are extremely unhealthy, and to some houses that depend on S. Agata.

The procurator, it is said, is Signor Domenico Ciardullo.

I have the honor to be with the most profound respect and with the sentiments of perfect submission

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 439.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He asks him for a report in regard to a monastery of his parish.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, April 13, 1764.

Reverend and Dear Sir: I have heard, to my very great sorrow, that in the monastery of which you speak, regular observance is on the decline; the Rule is but little observed, the door is often left open, and silence is not kept.

I had hoped that that monastery might be an example and a model for all the other monasteries of the diocese; and if that is true which I have been told, it is a monastery in which regular observance reigns less than in all others.

I beg your Reverence to write to me whether what has been reported to me is true or not.

I hope to be able to visit you towards the end of June, which will be the first visit that I shall pay; but I do not wish to wait till that time to assure myself of the truth of what has been told me, and to remedy these disorders if they really exist.

I wish you to examine with rigorous care whether the rules are observed, — rules which I know to be excellent, as I know several monasteries that have been established with the same rules. Report to me everything; and inform me how long a time will have to elapse before the triennial office of the present Superior expires. She may have been good up to the present, but now, on account of her age and bad health, she is no longer capable; and I believe that it has been on this account that there has been such a decline in the regular observance.

Consequently, make known to the nuns my desire and my will that at the next election there must be a change of Superior, and that in future all the rules must be observed. A fine beginning to secure the enclosure! If I do not see that the rules are rigorously and perseveringly observed, I myself will oppose enclosure; for if the rules are not observed, it will be better for the nuns to disband, to be released from their vows, and to return to their families. Of what use will it be to keep in this diocese a house full of imprisoned and dissatisfied women, who have very little love for God, and give but little edification to the public?

I expect a detailed answer to all these things; and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 440.

To Don Matteo Migliore, Parish Priest at S. Maria a Vico.

He refuses for a grave reason to grant him one of his requests.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, April 15, 1764.

My dear Don Matteo: I would grant to confessors the faculty to absolve reserved cases at any other time rather than at the Paschal time; for there is no better occasion to keep sinners from the reserved cases, and especially from blasphemies, than the Paschal time, during which they are obliged to confess in order not to be excommunicated. I regret having granted such a faculty to one or the other priest of Arienzo.

It is sufficient, therefore, that only you and your companions have the faculty. The vicars and other confessors can write to me when the case occurs, in order that they may put off absolution for this kind of slothful Christians.

I am however told that it is usual to grant such a faculty during the Paschal season; but this practice appears to me to be a great evil, which I cannot countenance.

I bless you and remain

Yours very affectionately and devotedly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 441.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He accepts the resignation of a Superior of nuns.

[April 15, 1764.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Reverend and Dear Sir: I cannot but praise the conduct of this good Mother Prioress, who, knowing that the rules are little observed, and what is more, feeling her strength exhausted by a long government, has thought of resigning her charge.

Out of deference to her zeal, which, I am satisfied, has induced her to abdicate, I accept her resignation. Before proceeding to the election of a new Prioress, I beg you to send me the rules, so that I may glance at them and avoid mistakes.

In the mean time, let the nuns think of choosing one among them that is most virtuous and most faithful to regular observance, since on her conduct depends the good or bad government of the convent in the spiritual as well as the temporal order.

I bless you and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 442.

To the Same.

Zeal of the saint for regular observance in the monastery at Frasso.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Sant' Agata, April 18, 1764.

My dear Don Francesco: With fools there is no reasoning; try therefore for the moment to arrange matters in the best way that you can, and tell the nuns to have

patience for some days; for I hope on Monday, if the weather permits, to send my Vicar to elect a Superior and an Assistant and set everything in order.

Yesterday I read nearly the whole book of rules, and I repeat: *the rules are very good.* But, if I mistake not, I have found the name of the bishop mentioned scarcely once, and otherwise no others are mentioned except the delegate and the économes; nor is mention made of the local vicar of the monastery whom the bishop has to appoint for this office. There is nothing said that the election of the Superior should be confirmed by the bishop, after it has taken place in his presence or in the presence of his Vicar-General or local vicar.

All these things should be inserted in the rules, by specially premising that the monastery and the nuns are in all things subject to obedience to the bishop, in regard to what concerns the spiritual good and the peace of the monastery and of the nuns. All this should be added to the rules.

But in order to do things in a surer way it will be necessary to see how the conservatory has been founded, what conditions the founders have laid down, by whom it should be administered, whether it is to be of a royal nomination, as I fear seculars will lay claim to it; in this case if the monastery is not under the jurisdiction of the bishop, I declare in advance that in regard to obtaining the enclosure I will not move a finger; and without my co-operation they cannot hope to see Rome approve of the enclosure. You will, therefore, do well, before the arrival of the Vicar, to send hither for examination all the papers relative to the foundation, the government, etc.; or at least to send notes of the papers that cannot be sent.

In the mean time I shall write out a sketch of all those things that need an explanation, and of the rules that should be especially observed; these the Vicar will take

with him when he goes there; but the devil has also to play his part, as he has already begun to do.

I bless you and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 443.

To Father Fabrizio Cimino, Rector of the House at Pagani.

He speaks of various subjects, and particularly of the refutation of Basnage.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, April 19, 1764.

I have received your letter and with it the sonnet [in honor] of the Blessed Virgin.

It consoles me to hear that Father Melchionna goes to Caposele. As for the penance, all goes well with him. Let him renew his vows in public; let him ask pardon for the scandal given to the Community, and let him take his meals on the floor three times a week for a month.

Sister Maria Benedetta writes me that she wishes to send me some chocolate. I told her that I did not need it, but still I am pretty sure she will send it.

I ask you to let me know as quickly as convenient the reply of Mgr. Volpe, as I wrote you in my last letter. I know that Mgr. Borgia is down with the erysipelas; let me know how he is getting along.

Every day there is danger of an outbreak here on account of the famine; and precautions must continually be taken.

I send my blessing to Father Melaccio;[1] I bless your Reverence and all the others.

I should like to know why Father [Alessandro de] Meo does not wish to write against Basnage. It would be a

[1] Father Donato Melaccio died three days after, that is, April 22, on Easter day.

grand work and would meet with great success. Many replies have already been issued at Naples, but as some of them are very weak, the task has been given up.

Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 444.

To the Nuns at Frasso.

He points out to them certain points of their Rule which they should particularly observe.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, April 22, 1764.

Very dear Mother and Daughters in Jesus Christ: I have not been able as yet to go to see you as I have desired to do; but I hope to see you without fail next June. However by this letter I wish to remind you of the end for which you have come to this monastery.

You have left the world to secure your eternal salvation and to belong entirely to Jesus Christ; in fact you have come to the convent in order to be saints. This is what I recommend to you: Become saints, and do not wish, after you have left the world and shut yourselves up within four walls, to expose yourselves to the danger of forever losing your souls.

This Community began well; but now it is not what it was in the beginning. You are religious, but Jesus Christ is not satisfied with you, because he wishes you all to be saints.

I your Father who loves you much in Jesus Christ desires to see you saints, but saints in reality and not merely in name; and therefore it will be necessary for you to devote yourselves to the strict observance of the Rule.

I do not wish to add anything, lest some one may complain, but I wish that hereafter this same Rule that you have embraced be rigorously observed. I especially recommend to you the following points:

First, silence in the morning and in the evening before meditation and after recreation, in the church, dormitory, sacristy, and refectory; a refectory in which one speaks, will no more be a refectory of nuns but a public inn for seculars. I therefore recommend to you, as the Rule says, that there should always be read some book of the Lives of the saints at the first table, and at the second, till the end of the first portion; on Saturdays the Rule should be read till half the meal is over.

Secondly, I recommend that the recreation be made in common in a room destined for this purpose, and not separately in other places.

Thirdly, I recommend the observing of the Rule of not entering the cells of others without the express permission of the Prioress. This is a sacred and holy Rule, and if it be not observed, a thousand miseries and dangers will be the result.

Fourthly, I recommend that the door should always be closed, that it should not be opened without a real necessity and without the permission of the Superior, and never on account of relatives. Moreover, I recommend that without the permission of the vicar no men, no women, no children should enter the monastery. I have lost all respect for those monasteries where the door is opened without necessity. It is true that in some monasteries this is freely practised, but I should not call these monasteries enclosures and houses of saints.

Fifthly, I recommend that the veil should be lowered in the presence of men in accordance with the Rule. This gives greater edification than if the nuns were seen in ecstasy.

Sixthly, I recommend above all that every Saturday there be held the Chapter of faults in which the Prioress, or another religious commissioned by the Prioress, makes a short addres about the faults that are noticed in the Community, or about some special rule, as that about meditation, mortification, obedience, poverty, meekness, charity towards one another and especially towards the sick, about modesty, resignation to the will of God in contrarieties, or the like.

Seventhly, every month, without fail, let the Prioress have a consultation with the Assistant and the Consultors, and let them end their discussion of affairs by taking the majority of the votes. In this manner everything will go on more orderly, and no room will be left for complaints on the part of the nuns.

Eighthly, let the Prioress make a visitation of the cells seven or eight times a year, as the Rule says; at least let her do so every two months on the first Monday, to see whether there is anything superfluous and contrary to the Rule.

Finally, I recommend that every one should make the spiritual reading in her cell within the hour of silence after recreation; and in summer it may be made after an hour of repose, because little sleep is taken at night.

I also recommend that every one should make privately every year the spiritual exercises, in strict silence without going to the parlor.

I hope that when I come in June I shall see observed everything commanded by the Rule and especially the things that I am now recommending to you.

There is no other remedy: God wishes you to be saints, and we must comply with his wish. Be convinced that only these things will make our death a happy one; all the rest will give only pain and remorse of conscience and cause us to die an unquiet death.

Let us hope with the help of the Lord to obtain the grace of having an enclosure; but I have protested and I again protest that if I do not see the Rule observed, I will do nothing in regard to the enclosure; and without my assistance Rome will not grant the enclosure.

I bless all, one after the other, and especially the Prioress who has been appointed, to whom I again recommend the above-mentioned things, and all the officials, in order that every one may attend perfectly to the duties of her office. Let every one recommend me specially to Jesus Christ when she makes a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

I remain

Yours devotedly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the diocese of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

LETTER 445.

To His Secretary Don Felice Verzella, at Sant' Agata.

Various recommendations.

Live Jesus and Mary!

DURAZZANO, [month of June, 1764.]

I send you this open letter to Telesa, because I wish you to send him a letter of credit of thirty ducats [1] to the order of Canon Don Gioacchino; to it add thirty *carlini*, [2] and deliver both to the messenger whom the archdeacon will send to Montefusco; but first make sure that the messenger is a faithful person.

If it is possible for you to send this money, add the following words: "I send thirty-three ducats, that is, a

[1] 12.50 frs. [2] 12.75 frs.

letter of credit of thirty ducats, and thirty *carlini* in money. Twenty-three ducats are for what you have paid to the secretary and to the soldiers, and ten ducats are a present, as we are greatly obliged to you for so many inconveniences and labors that you have undergone on our account."

In case, however, you cannot send the money, write in a different way, as follows: "I am still at Durazzano; as soon as I return to Sant' Agata I will have the money sent to you."

Say then to the archdeacon that I have paid thirty-one ducats only for the board of the officials of the tribunal, and that I have written to Don Giuseppe, not that he should reimburse me, because I do not claim anything, but that he may not pay this bill; otherwise the debt would be paid twice.

Send me the mules immediately.

Yours very affectionately and devotedly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the de Feo family at Calabritto.

LETTER 446.

To a Nun of His Diocese.

Nature of tepidity.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

DURAZZANO, June 15, 1764.

I herewith enclose the permission for Father Guardian, because I think that it may be useful to your soul to confer with him about your spiritual disquietudes.

You must, however, not be uneasy because you experience tedium and distractions in your exercises of piety, and even in your Communions, imagining that you perform them without devotion and without faith.

To experience tedium and disgust in prayer and in the other exercises of piety is not tepidity: it is sufficient if we perform them with a good intention, and do not omit them. The tepidity that is injurious is that which makes us omit these exercises either because of the tedium that we experience, or because of the earthly pleasures of which we do not wish to deprive ourselves.

Move on; continue your exercises when you can perform them, even though it may appear to you that it is time lost, and leave all to God.

When you commit a fault do not be troubled; make an act of love of God, and resume your journey onward. We have to do with a good Master, who, as soon as he sees an humble soul, takes it at once into his arms and presses it to his heart.

Make no difficulty in leaving all your prayers when the service of the Community calls you.

Do not fail to recommend me to Jesus Christ in your visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

I bless you, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 447.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Date to be fixed for holding a general Chapter of the Congregation.

July 4, [1764].

. . . . . It is necessary that the Chapter should be held before October, for then the cold weather sets in; moreover, then I shall have to attend to the affairs of my soul, as I find my breast very weak; — I know what happened to me last winter.

Pray to God for me a poor, worn-out old man, who has to struggle and to dispute continually in this difficult

and wearisome position of bishop, and Bishop of Sant' Agata, where there are many wicked people, people who have grown old in sin. . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xxi.

LETTER 448.

To the Same.

The house where the Chapter is to be held.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

FRASSO, July 21, 1764.

Dear Don Andrea: For the Chapter I am willing to go to Nocera, for, as you say, it is more convenient for the Fathers.

But now I remember what was said several times, namely, that it would be well if the Chapter were held in the Papal States at Sant' Angelo [a Cupolo], in order thereby to take away from any Father doubts about the validity of the votes and acts of the Chapter.

But all I wish to say, is: Consider the matter well and then let me know the result.

I bless your Reverence and all the others.

Send me without fail Father [Alessandro de] Meo.

I would wish that Mgr. Borgia would assist at the Chapter, as we can say that God has used him to give great stability to the Congregation; and he himself, I know would like to be present; but if the Chapter is held at Sant' Angelo, he will hardly be able to be present; hence you can hold it at Nocera.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Father Margotta[1] is given up by the phy-

[1] Father Margotta was at that time at Naples, where as Procurator-General he nearly always remained. His sickness was caused by an epidemic which broke out in consequence of the famine, and which

sicians; he received extreme Unction yesterday evening at six o'clock.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 449.

To Don Federico Bellucci, at Mellizzano.

He requests him to suppress a public scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

FRASSO, July 25, 1764.

Dear Sir: I beg you to be so kind as to remedy the great scandal that is caused by the wicked life led by Sabella Garofano, who lives near the hamlet of Ducenta, and who by her lasciviousness is the occasion of many complaints on the part of a large number of persons.

As she is living in her own place, I cannot take such precautions as will prevent people from falling over the precipice.

My dear Don Federico, see to it that she is put into prison, and thus inspire her with fear; for you well know that public women are not allowed to live in small places.

began in May and spread with extraordinary rapidity. Up to July 21, the date of this letter, five thousand persons had died.

St. Alphonsus had scarcely been informed of Father Margotta's illness when he sent Father Gallo to Naples to assist him, a charity which he performed for seventeen days. When the news of Father Margotta's illnes had spread, many persons distinguished by birth and by learning came to visit him. Among others the Prince of Caposele did not allow a single day to pass without visiting him. St. Alphonsus was now obliged to recall Father Gallo, and as Father Margotta's condition was growing worse, he sent Father Ferrara to take his place. Assisted and comforted by the latter and by two Brothers, Father Margotta died August 11, 1764, after having all the consolations of our holy religion and with full confidence in the intercession of our Blessed Lady.

I am sure that for the glory of God and the salvation of souls you will perform this act of charity; for I have been told that this wicked woman is scandalizing the whole neighborhood. Anxious to hear that you will grant me this favor in accordance with my request, I remain,

Your very devoted and grateful servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 450.

To Sister Maria Saveria Foglia, Prioress of the Monastery of Regina Cœli at Airola.

He reproves the false zeal of some nuns.

[The year 1764?]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Reverend and Dear Mother: I am more and more consoled by your obedience and by your resignation. Let our good God dispose matters; he it is that is to enlighten those religious.

Tell these very zealous religious that I know well what I can do and what I cannot do.[1] They have not studied books as I have studied them.

I add nothing nor take away anything from the points of the Rule, and it is only what belongs to the substance that I cannot change. Yet when there is question of a simple circumstance, as for instance the changing of the hour of an exercise, and the ecclesiastical Superior sees

[1] On account of the circumstances of the times and the rigor of the Rule many things were not observed among these Franciscan nuns. St. Alphonsus, therefore, reformed their Rule and had it printed; but although the nuns gratefully embraced the new Rule, yet some did not wish to consent to a change of the hour for the recitation of Matins, and made some complaints which greatly displeased the saint.

that the old system impedes the good of the Community, he may make the necessary change.

In the monastery of S. Severino, at Naples, the Office was at first said about midnight, but because few of the religious attended it, and because of other good reasons, the Abbot some years ago changed the hour, and prescribed that the Office should be said about one hour after sunset.

The religious say that they are satisfied with reciting the Office about sunset; but I see that this is too late, the more so as a half hour's meditation is to precede. Moreover, in order to come to a conclusion I consent to your granting them any hour in the evening that they may desire for the recitation of the Office. When they see that in summer they must rise so late in the morning, they themselves will agree to ask that the Office be said sooner.

In the mean while I feel uneasy in regard to the Communions of those that do not wish to obey; I expect to meet them on the day of judgment. As for myself, I must provide for the greater good of the Community; those that wish to plunge their conscience into perplexity will have to render an account to God; for it would be all over with obedience if one should have to do what the subordinates wish to have done.

I bless you, and I pray to God to give you strength, etc.; at present, I sympathize with you more than ever in your troubles, seeing that you have to do with religious of this kind. It is surprising how religious can make so nice distinctions in everything, and attach such importance to small matters.

Believe me, dear Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved at S. Paolo at Piacenza.

LETTER 451.

To the Same.

Prohibition in regard to presents.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, August 11, 1764.

I give you as a rule in your quality of Abbess, as well as to all the Abbesses that may succeed you, not to send presents on the part of the Community to any outside person, at any time whatsoever; only at Christmas and at the Assumption it is permitted to give some little gift of eatables to the Vicar-General, the administrator, the advocate, the organist, the doctor, and the notary.

It is also forbidden to send bread to any one.

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 452.

To Dr. Geronimo Truppi.

He appoints him physician extraordinary to the convent of Airola.

[ARIENZO, August 26, 1764.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

As we have to provide an extraordinary physician for the monastery of the nuns of *Regina Cœli* of Airola, and have confidence in the goodness and the integrity of Doctor Don Geronimo Truppi, we choose him for this office, and grant him for this purpose all the necessary faculties.

We also desire that he should receive all the usual emoluments, honors, etc.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.
FELICE VERZELLA,
Secretary.

After a copy.

LETTER 453.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He points out to him two grave abuses in the convent of the nuns of Frasso.

[The year 1764?]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

The nuns of the monastery lately asked me to help them to obtain the confirmation of your Reverence and of Don Giovanni Picone as their spiritual Fathers, for they have very much praised the interest that you take in their welfare. Now, however, I hear that there exist in the monastery two abuses that are entirely against their Rule, which expressly forbids the washing of the bed-clothes of outsiders within the monastery. I also hear that not only is this done in the monastery, but that other garments are likewise sent in to be washed. This is an abuse that cannot be tolerated.

The other abuse is the making of sweetmeats for weddings. This is also an infraction of the Rule, which forbids such a thing. I am, therefore, compelled to forbid these two abuses to the nuns, and under excommunication to the Prioress and to the vicar if they permit it, and to every nun and lay-sister who should co-operate in doing these things and maintaining these abuses.

I ask, therefore, that you make known to the nuns this my order and excommunication. I have been obliged to apply

this remedy, since I understand that these abuses have lasted for a long time, and now they must be removed without fail. Let me know whether the nuns are obedient in regard to this matter; otherwise I will deprive them of the sacraments.

I bless you, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 454.

To Don Ottaviano Rainone.

He grants him a favor.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, October 18, 1764.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I have received the brief with the royal assent, and I have already given it to the archdeacon to forward it.

In regard to the permission to celebrate or to have Mass celebrated on a portable altar until the new chapel is constructed, I can grant it to you only for a short time and on account of the illness of your brother. Hence have the chapel built as soon as possible, and in the mean time a movable altar may be used. — As for the days excepted in the brief, I will do all that I can to serve you. I salute and bless your brother, and remain,

Your very devoted and obedient servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I desire to know the news about the conservatory, and about the late Prioress.

After a copy.

LETTER 455.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

Prudence of the saint in the conferring of benefices.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, October 25, 1764.

A chaplaincy being vacant in the church of the Nunziata in consequence of the translation of a chaplain of this church to my cathedral, I have learned that the priest Giov. Battista Sanguigno is urging your Excellency to be admitted to said chaplaincy, without reflecting that he is incapable; for he is totally unfit both as to science and as to singing, so necessary to the post to which he aspires, since he is obliged to lend his assistance in the Office. He forgets, moreover, the life that he has led and for which he has already been cited before my tribunal; hence he is unworthy of every ecclesiastical benefice. All this having been considered, I believe it to be my duty to inform your Excellency that if this priest should present himself, you should refuse to appoint him, for on no account could I confirm his nomination to such a post.

This is the request that I make of you, and wishing the honor of your commands, I remain most respectfully,

Your very devoted and obedient servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] There is here a good priest for this vacancy; his name is Don Pasquale Barricelli. However, your Excellency may give the place to whom you think best, but not to the said Giov. Battista Sanguigno, as I have requested you, for it would be a scandal to see sitting in the choir a salaried priest who is anything but exemplary.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 456.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

He exhorts her to bear contempt patiently.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, November 18, 1764.

I write to you in haste because I am overwhelmed with work; and I answer only what concerns you without taking notice of others. As to the person who takes things from her family, let her consult her confessor about the matter.

In regard to what concerns you, I have but a word to say to you on the subject of the goods that you will leave at your death. If the members of your family are embarrassed it will be better that you bequeath them what belongs to you.

As for spiritual matters, I am glad that you are maltreated and despised. I wish that you would always ask Jesus Christ *for ill-treatment and contempt with the strength to endure them, and not for sensible consolation and tenderness.*

Do not omit to recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I never omit to do so for you.

I bless you, and remain,

Your devoted and grateful servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 457.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He wishes absolutely the erection of a new parish.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, December 3, 1764.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: It has come to my knowledge that you do not think it opportune to establish another parish or annex in the lower part of Frasso.

As I have already said at Frasso, I believe that this is not only useful but necessary. The reasons that actuate me you yourself can consider.

It is useless to say that there are already two churches at Frasso; for these are situated at the upper extremity of the town and are close to each other so that most of the people are far away from them and cannot ascend to those parts without great inconvenience. Now this is precisely the case about which the Council of Trent (*Sess.* xxi. c. 4) says that the bishop may establish new parishes, assigning according to his judgment to the new parish priest a suitable income to be drawn from the mother church.

Your Reverence showed yourself at Frasso to be willing to carry out this work, but now you are opposed to it.[1] For my part I believe before God that this new church should be built at any rate, and I wish to be obeyed in this matter.

As for the place, it will be well to build in the beginning

[1] Father Tannoia (book iii. chap. xxiii.) writes thus about this affair: "In the district of Frasso St. Alphonsus saw that many souls could not be conveniently assisted by the parish priest as they were too far from the church of the archpriest. He wished, therefore, to divide the parish and appoint to a church, which already existed there, a priest who should depend on the mother church. But the archpriest opposed this in an obstinate manner."

a chapel with a view to enlarge it whenever it becomes necessary.

It will at least be necessary to assign to the parish priest who is to come, the appropriate sum of a hundred ducats, [1] and twenty or at least twelve ducats for the keeping of a substitute. If then it is desired to unite the revenues of the archpresbytery to those of the Chapter, I will not dissent, provided the following conditions be made:

First, that two hundred ducats be assigned to the archpriest and forty ducats to a vicar, so that a strange priest may be able to live there whenever no one of the place is found suitable; and this vicar shall be appointed by the bishop *pro tempore*.

Secondly, a hundred and twelve ducats shall be assigned to the parish priest of the lower town; this assignment shall have to be made in every case whether the annexation of the revenues of the archpriest to those of the Chapter be made or not.

Thirdly, the election of Canons should be made hereafter as in all other collegiate churches. The present number of Canons should be maintained; but it will also be expedient that their number be hereafter reduced to eighteen, or at the most to twenty-four. It would even be better if there were eighteen, so that every one may maintain himself with suitable decorum.

However, I repeat, the church of the lower town should be absolutely established.

I have wished to write this letter to your Reverence in order that you may know that I intend to carry out my resolution.

I expect an answer in order to be able to take all the measures that such an affair demands.

I bless you and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

[1] 425 frs.

LETTER 458.

To Primicerius Petti.

The same subject.

[December 1764.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I beg you to tell the archpriest that if he will not yield, I am resolved to pursue the matter, and I believe that I have the right of establishing at least a chapel of ease for the spiritual good of these people, so that they may be able to have it convenient to go to confession, to hear a sermon every Sunday, to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and to perform novenas and other exercises of devotion.

I am certain that none of these things are now practised on account of the great distance, and the mountainous route that they have to take in every kind of weather.

The expense will not stop me, even though it should amount to four or five hundred ducats,[1] because I think that the glory of God is concerned. Represent all these things to him properly, and try to prevail on him by gentleness,[2] otherwise we shall not be able to do anything, because the man is obstinate, always loaded with debt, and does not like to spend money except after his own fancy....

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xxiii.

1 2125 frs.

2 It seems that the archpriest showed himself later on more docile, since on July 18, of the following year St. Alphonsus in his report to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars wrote as follows: "In terra Fraxii, præter archipresbyteralem ecclesiam, cui est animarum cura adnexa, post non paucas dissensiones cum actuali archipresbytero dictæ ecclesiæ habitas et, Deo adjuvante, mediis propriis, sine judiciorum strepitu jam victas, alteram ecclesiam sive cappellaniam in loco aptiori, pro majori parochianorum commodo, in vicis ab ipsa archipresbyterali remotioribus habitantium construendam statui." (In the district of Frasso, besides the archpresbytery church to which the care of souls is annexed, with God's

LETTER 459.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He asks him to examine a vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, December 8, 1764.

I have received from the messenger the enclosed letter, from which I learn that a priest of Castello in the barony wishes to enter our Congregation.[1]

The Fathers who are there on a mission have not written a word to me on this subject; but I think we cannot refuse his application. At any rate do as you see fit and tell the priest what he is to do; meanwhile I have written to him that he should have applied to you, as I cannot interfere in the affairs of the Congregation.

I bless you and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

help and by my own means without the aid of judges I have resolved to establish in a part of the city too remote from the archpresbytery church another church or chaplaincy in a more suitable place for the greater convenience of the parishioners after a little dissension had arisen between me and the present archpriest of the said church." But it is also known that Don Francesco di Filippo began to put greater obstacles in the way; wherefore the saint in his report of 1771 tells the same Congregation: "Attamen opus tam necessarium, ob recursum ab illo archipresbytero ad regios ministros habitum, effectum hactenus sortiri nequivit." (However this so necessary a work, on account of the appeal which the archpriest made to the royal ministers could not yet be accomplished.) — And Tannoia makes known to us that the design of the zealous pastor was not carried out, still more on account of his resignation of the episcopate.

[1] The name of this priest was Pasquale Orlandella. He entered the novitiate, January 25, 1765, and made his religious profession the following year.

LETTER 460.

To Don Giovanni Maria Puoti,[1] at Arienzo.

Letter of thanks and good wishes.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, December 24, 1764.

My dear Sir: I thank you for the affectionate expressions of well wishes which you deigned to offer me for the feast

[1] Don Giovanni Maria Puoti was a brother of Mgr. Antonio Puoti, Archbishop of Amalfi. Later on St. Alphonsus knew by a supernatural knowledge the time of his death. The following is the juridical deposition given by his wife, Anna Irene de Massi in the process of the saint's beatification (*Summar.* n. 31, § 128 pag. 695): "With certain knowledge I depose that the servant of God, Mgr. de Liguori, was endowed by God with the gift of prophecy. I experienced this most beautiful gift at the death of my late husband, Don Giovanni Maria Puoti, a judge at the tribunal of the *Vicaria*. He was sick in the house which we had at Arienzo. The servant of God, who resided at Arienzo, did not fail to visit him every day. The day preceding his death, having come to my house, before entering the room of the sick man he called me and asked me what opinion the physicians had given of my husband. I answered that that morning strange physicians who had come from Naples to visit him had found him better, and that they expressed the well-founded hope that he would soon be well. Then the servant of God said to me: *May God grant this! I compassionate you, the poor mother* (who was then still living) *and the brothers who love him so much;* he moreover added: *I know that Monsignor* (meaning Mgr. the Archbishop of Amalfi my brother-in-law) *will be too much affected to say Mass in the room of the sick man, hence I now give permission to D. Antonio to do so.* From these words I at once clearly understood that my husband would die of his infirmity. In the mean time, as there appeared no indication of a certain and proximate death, since before, as I have said, there was well-founded hope that he would soon become well, the words of the servant of God, communicated by me to others were not believed, and many made fun of them. The event however confirmed what he had predicted, since on the following day my husband suddenly

of Christmas. While at the same time I feel myself bound to wish you the same I implore the Lord to grant you all the prosperity that he knows to be desirable in accordance with your merit.

I am delighted that you are again to be married, and with infinite pleasure I release you from the small tax that is due to the chancery.

I wish you success with your new spouse, and I pray to the Lord to bless your marriage. May you enjoy good health, and I remain,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 461.

To Father Antonio Tannoia.

The saint asks for some information.

[Beginning of January 1765.]

I wish to know two things:

First, whether the instruction of Father Landi is copied from the first which I made or from the second which Fathers Lembo and Passaro [1] copied.

The second question is, whether there has been any talk

grew worse contrary to the judgment of the physicians and common expectation, and passed from this to a better life. After the death of my husband the servant of God again came to my house to console me, and with every assurance said to me: *You should recommend yourself to the soul of your husband, as I also recommend myself, because Don Giovanni Maria is in Paradise.* And indeed it was well known even by persons who were intelligent and well instructed that my husband in view of the holy life which he had led had died in the odor of sanctity."

[1] Fathers Carmine Lembo, Amato Passaro, and Giuseppe Landi were three Fathers of our Congregation.

about my affair [1] at Naples with Mgr. Borgia or with others; I would like to know what they say.

No more at present. I bless you and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 462.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He expresses his dissatisfaction about a certain affair and speaks to him about a postulant.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, [January] 6, 1765.

I received your letter last evening through the kindness of Don Alessandro Speranza.

As for Father Melchionna, I thought I had spoken clearly to Father Caione two months ago, when I asked for Father Melchionna and another Father to give exercises to the people here [at Sant' Agata]. I then asked your Reverence to give the exercises in Lent, not to the people, but to the priests; for during Lent there is a regular preacher for the people. If I had known that Father Melchionna could not come, I would have asked for another Father. But enough of this; Father Caione has bungled the whole affair. As he knew my request, he should have sent me Father Melchionna.

With regard to Speranza, I told him that the matter was in the hands of the Consultors, as I could not interfere. I write this in secret to you, as in my letter, which Speranza will hand to you, I do not explain myself. I do not feel inclined to receive him. He is a good man, but he is of a hasty temperament; moreover, he is somewhat advanced in years and has studied very little: and you can gain

[1] This affair was his resignation of the episcopate.

time by referring to the votes of the Consultors who have to decide, the more so as he has to arrange his affairs before leaving home. However if the Consultors decide to receive him, I have no objection.[1]

I bless your Reverence and all the others.

BROTHER ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

[*P. S.*] You say nothing about the other postulants and several other priests; I refer them all to you to decide among yourselves.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 463.

To the Same.

He speaks about his project of resigning the episcopate.

Live Jesus and Mary!

January 7, 1765.

I received Father Tannoia's letter wherein he tells me that Mgr. Borgia has approved my intended resignation.

Still I wish to be sure that I am doing the will of God in this matter and that it is for his glory. I wish your Reverence before coming to me to consult without delay Fathers Porcara and Alasio,[2] de Matteis[3] and especially Don Gennaro Fatigati.[4]

I bless your Reverence and all the others.

After the Roman edition.

1 Don Alessandro Speranza was not admitted to the novitiate.

2 These Fathers were priests of the Mission.

3 Father de Matteis, Provincial of the Jesuits at Naples.

4 Don Gennaro Fatigati, Superior of the Chinese College.

LETTER 464.

To the Parish Priests of His Diocese.

He asks them for the *status* of souls intrusted to their care.

SANT' AGATA DE' GOTI, January 10, 1765.

Reverend and Dear Sirs: By a letter of the representative of the *royal Chamber della Summaria*,[1] Signor Marchese Cavalcanti, the request is made for the present condition of the souls in this district of our diocese, to be drawn up with due distinction and in a valid form, of which such use is to be made as will correspond to the execution of the sovereign command of his Majesty, the king, our master.

In the mean time we advise you by this letter, so that every one with the return of our present messenger may forward to us the respective *status* of the souls of his district, sealed and attested by a public notary, to be subsequently transmitted to the said royal Chamber.

Let all execute this with your accustomed promptness and care, and imparting to you our pastoral blessing, we remain,

Yours affectionately and devotedly

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

1 The royal Chamber of the *Summaria* was a tribunal charged with settling differences between individuals and the treasury.

LETTER 465.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He again speaks to him about his project of resigning the episcopate.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, January 14, 1765.

I have already written you a letter about [Mgr.] Borgia's opinion in the matter; now I beg you before setting out for this place to see Don Gennaro Fatigati, Fathers Porcara and Alasio, and Father de Matteis.

The most weighty reason is not as [Mgr.] Borgia says the wish for solitude, for this is excluded by the words of the chapter: *Nisi, de renunc.;* it is my advanced age, for in September I shall enter upon my seventieth year; moreover I am troubled with weakness of the breast. Last winter I was almost always sick here at S. Agata and this winter too, so that one might say I have been sick ever since I came here. During the past month the asthma has confined me to my bed.

However, it is true (I must tell everything in order to be without scruple) I still attend to all business and am always at my post.

Only in the winter I cannot visit the diocese nor appear in the choir of the church. Yet during the summer when my breast does not trouble me I spend three or four months in visiting the diocese.

I have so many personal scruples to combat, so many scandals to suppress, so many refusals to give that I am as it were overwhelmed with them, and my natural desire is to resign my charge. Now all this makes me fear that I am seeking my own comfort and not the glory of God; hence I wish to ascertain what will be more conducive to the glory of God.

I ask you to keep this matter a profound secret and to beg the others to whom I have communicated it, to do the same. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 466.

To the Same.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 1, 1765.

(*Confidential letter.*)

I have received your note and have learned what Fathers Alasio and Porcara have said; but my dear Don Andrea, I wish above all to have a quiet conscience.

It is true that the trouble caused me by business matters and scruples of conscience which beset me continually, impel me to seek freedom and quiet; but I do not wish my cell to become a hell to me, for having cast off my burden against the will of God.

I am certain that three years ago God wished me to be bishop; now to lay down my burden, I must be certain (morally speaking) that God does not wish me to be bishop any longer. It grieves me that these are matters that must be discussed orally and not by letter; still, as you are at Naples about this affair I must write everything necessary to receive sound and well-founded counsel, after all the reasons have been weighed.

It is necessary to understand, that, according to St. Thomas, a bishop is bound by vow not to leave his church; and the Pope, in chapter *Nisi, de renunc.*, says that without a just cause the bishop cannot leave it. Among the reasons advanced, he expressly says that neither oppressive troubles nor a love of solitude, as Mgr. Borgia thought, is a sufficient cause.

My principal reasons are old age and bad health; but remark that the Pope says that old age and ill health excuse one, when they unfit one for the exercise of his duty. Thus we read in the chapter already quoted, *Nisi*, § 3: *Another reason is bodily weakness arising from sickness or old age; not, however, any weakness, but that which renders one unable to fulfil the pastoral obligations.*[1] Then he adds: *It sometimes happens that while the weakness of the body is for an old man a good reason for resigning his charge, his mature mind (a quality usual with men of his age) is yet a stronger reason for remaining at his post.*[2]

Now let us return to my case: it is necessary to consult about the matter those to whom you have already spoken or to whom you have yet to speak; it would be well to consult Father Chiesa.[3] It is true I am an old man, as in September I shall complete my sixty-ninth year; it is true, I am in bad health, and am troubled with catarrh, which attacks me in winter; but with all this it appears to me that I fulfil the duties of my office in the examination of confessors and of candidates for ordination as well about their science as about their manner of life; with regard to science, I do very much more than others. As for scandals, I pursue them until they cease. In the matter of preferments, I promote only those who are the most deserving, and this even in simple benefices; thus I make more enemies than friends. It is true again that I cannot

[1] "Alia vero causa est debilitas corporis ex infirmitate vel ex senectute: nec tamen omnis, sed illa solummodo per quam impotens redditur ad exsequendum officium pastorale."

[2] "Cum interdum non plus hortetur senilis debilitas aliquem cedere, quam moralis maturitas (quæ in senibus esse solet) ipsam in suo suadet officio permanere."

[1] Father Giannicola Chiesa, was a member of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, of the Congregation of Santo Giovanni a Carbonara.

visit the diocese in winter, but in summer I spend four or five months in that work. I do not go out in winter; but I manage all business, examinations, and write private letters, as my head is always in good condition. I cannot write much myself, but in secret matters I employ Francesco Antonio,[1] whom I can trust.

It is necessary to speak of all these points to the persons already mentioned; otherwise I shall resign my bishopric with scruples that will pursue me to Nocera. I pray Jesus to make known to me his will.

Supposing matters to stand as stated above, I do not think that I can without scruple resign under the plea that I cannot fulfil the duties of my office on account of my advanced age and ill health; this it is which troubles me very much. Yesterday I laid the matter before Father Ferrara who was here on his way to Caiazzo, making him at the same time read the words of the Pope as quoted above. Now I am sending you this by a messenger in order that before you leave Naples you may consult those good Fathers. I shall not be satisfied if you do not mention everything I have written.

One word more: I know that the air of Sant' Agata in winter is very bad for me, as well because the place is very damp as because the house is badly situated. But if I have to remain I shall think of going for the winter to Arienzo, to S. Maria a Vico, a place that is warm and dry.

I wish to escape so many scruples, struggles and contests, but I hear these words: *Si diligis me, pasce oves meas* [If you love me, feed my sheep], and it does not matter whether I die here. And this perplexity as to the

[1] Francesco Antonio Romito was a lay-brother of the Congregation. He was always in the service of St. Alphonsus at Sant' Agata and after his return to Pagani. At the beatification of the saint he was one of the most important witnesses. This excellent Brother was born at Naples June 13, 1722; he entered the Congregation in 1741, and died a holy death, November 4, 1807.

will of God is a source of trouble of spirit greater than aught else.

If your Reverence goes to Caiazzo, do not fail to visit me on your return; if not, I shall expect you in Lent.

Again I beg you not to take Father [Alessandro de] Meo from his writing.

I bless you. Live Jesus and Mary!

I have been troubled some time with the asthma; now I am better.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 467.

To Sister Chiara Gaiano, in the Monastery of the SS. Trinità at Ravello.

She should try to sanctify herself in the convent where she is.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, February 20, 1765.

I answer your letter by first telling you not to think of changing your monastery, because in view of the circumstances it would be very difficult and almost impossible; merely to wish to make a change would cause you great trouble.

You must, besides, know that with the exception of a few monasteries all the rest, as far as I know, are like yours; there we find the rules very little observed, with much excitement and confusion.

Whenever you can remedy an evil by kind words, do so; whenever you cannot, recollect yourself before the Blessed Sacrament, or retire to your cell, and do not be concerned about what is passing.

Keep the Rule as well as you can; for example, when the Community neglects prayer, you must not neglect it.

If the order of the day is disturbed on account of disputes, etc.; accommodate yourself to the Community, such as it is, since it will not depend upon you to furnish a remedy.

Do not attach yourself to any party; when there is question of regular observance and of the service of God, always join those that show more zeal for what is good, and it will not matter if you are afterwards insulted and ill-treated by the others.

Never permit these disorders to take you away from your prayers and Communions. Always console yourself with the thought that you are in the house of God, and that you are no longer in the world.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ when you make your visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

I bless you, and sign myself, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 468.

To Don Matteo Migliori, Parish Priest at S. Maria a Vico.

Solution of a moral case relative to fasting.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 3, 1765.

Reverend and Dear Sir: I answer your letter [1] and say: At the present time it is the common opinion that wine even when taken to appease hunger is not against the law of fasting.

[1] The saint answered the following letter:

Right Reverend and Dear Sir: As there are two opinions contrary to each other, one that teaches that the precept of fasting is transgressed by drinking wine outside of meals *ad sedandam famem* [to appease hunger], the other that teaches entirely the opposite; we find

It may only be doubted whether it is contrary to the end of fasting, for which reason it may be only a venial sin. But I am inclined to think that it is not.

Now in regard to preaching this in the pulpit, it is sufficient to say that to drink wine is not a mortal sin against the obligation of fasting. But while preaching this it will be well to reprove with ardor those that become intoxicated in the taverns.

Yes, I now destine as chaplain at S. Marco Don Giu-

confessors some of whom hold the opinion in favor of the first, others who are in favor of the second opinion, both in and out of confession. From such opposed decisions spring disquiet of consciences and little esteem for the confessors themselves who in their practice do not agree with one another. Now as I am desirous of taking away this confusion and of quieting the consciences I come reverently to ask your Lordship to let me know:

First, whether after what has been taught by your Lordship in your Moral Theology there is any declaration of the Holy See which decides that the precept of fasting is violated by drinking wine *extra refectionem* [out of meal-time] for the purpose of appeasing hunger.

Secondly, I desire to know whether in case there is no such new declaration, it be allowed and expedient to teach from the altar, one of the said opinions, that is, to declare that it is lawful to drink wine outside of meal-time for the purpose of appeasing hunger, or to condemn absolutely as transgressors of the precept those who outside of meals drink for the purpose of appeasing hunger.

Thirdly, I desire to know whether, supposing it be lawful to teach from the altar that there is no transgression of the law by drinking wine *extra mensam* [outside of meals] it be also allowed to preach from the altar that by drinking wine for such a purpose that only a venial sin is committed against the aim and purpose of the precept, or that it is not even a venial sin for the reasons given by your Lordship in your Moral Theology.

The answer on these points your Lordship will please write on this paper. Finally I ask you for your pastoral blessing, and deign to accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your most obedient and devoted servant

MATTEO MIGLIORE.

S. MARIA A VICO, March 3, 1765.

seppe Pasta who I suppose has already been approved by me as confessor; otherwise it will be necessary for him to present himself to be examined.

I bless you and remain,

Yours most cordially,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 469.

To Father Andrea Villani.

The saint informs him that he has respected one of his decisions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 7, 1765.

The Bishop of Nocera [1] has written to me a letter, asking me to let Father Melchionna stay at Nocera.

I answered him as follows: "I have spoken to Father Villani about the matter, but I was told that for very good reasons this could not be done, and I do not wish to oppose his Reverence who governs the Congregation."

No more at present. I bless you and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] Benedetto Maria delli Monti Sanfelice.

LETTER 470.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

He condemns mortifications performed against obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 15, 1765.

I hear that you are sick and all swollen, and that in this state you have used the discipline. You have done wrong by acting against the order that I have given you; for I have several times told you that when you are indisposed, it is my wish that you do not perform any penance. Now you must omit the discipline till your health is entirely re-established.

I have, moreover, learned that you did not mention your infirmity to the doctor for fear of being obliged to break the Lenten fast: in this you have also done wrong. Send for the doctor immediately, and do what he tells you.

As for your complaint that you do not see God any more, it is sufficient that he be in your heart, and it does not matter that he is far from your eyes.

Continue to recommend me every day to Jesus Christ; I shall do the same for you. I bless you.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] Salute for me Signora Donna Emilia.

After an old copy.

LETTER 471.

To Father Giuseppe Melchionna.

Advice and encouragement.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, March 31, 1765.

As I see, it is a great temptation with which the devil is assailing you by making you think that Don Andrea is against you, and that he cannot look at you. For pity's sake drive away this temptation, because it may make you lose your vocation again, and it is this at which the devil is aiming.

If at present Don Andrea has not wished to allow you to remain at Nocera, the reason is, not that he is against you, but that he has good reasons and desires to maintain the peace of that house. Therefore, the devil with the aid of your hypochondria makes you see many things through green spectacles.

As for the work of the missions and other work, have no fear; we all, including Don Andrea, know how much you suffer on account of your health. When some exercise that surpasses your strength is allotted to you, you must tell the Superior with childlike confidence: *At the present time I feel that I am unable to perform it, etc.* And if you see that the Superiors have but little consideration for your health, write to me from the place where you are; I will then try to apply a remedy.

I feel compassion for you on account of the fatigue that you have been undergoing this Lent; the work was excessive and without intermission. In future I will see to it that no more work so continuous be imposed upon you.

Remember, however, that you are living in a Community of which every member must bear his part of sufferings.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I am dictating this letter from my bed where since last night a fever has confined me; it has not yet ceased. God's will be done!

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 472.

To Don Carlo Pavone, Royal Administrator of the Nitre Works.

He recommends to him a calumniated man.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

April 27, 1765.

. . . . I assure you that the man [Marco Bergamo] is honest; if he has failed in giving you the requisite contribution of nitre, it is owing to the failure of those who are in his employ.

I therefore earnestly entreat you to allow this man to keep his license, and to treat him with all the charity with which your good heart is filled.

I shall always be grateful to you for what you will deign to do in his favor. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxvii.

LETTER 473.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He recommends a priest for a chaplaincy.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, May 5, 1765.

My life is drawing to a close and as chaplain of the Nunziata, I beg you to appoint a successor in the person of Don Cesare Macchella, who is already confessor and vicar of that church; he has at present a very small salary and is burdened with a great deal of labor, having to care for six hundred souls.

He has made two *concursus* one for the cathedral parish, the other for the parish of S. Angelo in this city and has been approved. He is also well instructed in Gregorian chant. Hence he appears to me to be worthy of your Excellency's preference to all others.

I hope your Excellency will favor my petition. I have the honor to be your Excellency's very humble, devoted and grateful servant, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 474.

To an Artist.

He begs him to finish a picture of our Lady as quickly as possible.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, May 12, 1765.

Dear Sir: I thank you for the agreeable information you have sent me in telling me that you have already begun the picture of our good Mother Mary, for the church of the nuns at Frasso, and now I ask our Lady to have you finish it very quickly.

My dear Don Paolo, you tell me you love our Lady very much; I believe you but I wish you to instil this love into the hearts of others. Hence finish the picture as quickly as you can, for by means of it the Madonna will be loved also by others.

With regard to the young man of whom you have spoken to me, I shall not fail to assist him when I am at Frasso, and I shall find means to console you. Meanwhile, tell him to study and to love God and our Lady.

Pray for me, as I am praying for you.

No more at present. I am yours devotedly, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 475.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

Reasons why he so often invokes his protection.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

May 14, 1765.

I beg pardon if I have seemed importunate in recommending again the priest Don Cesare Macchella; I relied, however, upon your letter wherein you told me that you had not as yet selected a person for the chaplaincy. I am sending this priest as pastor to the hamlets of Sant' Agata, as he is a young man of great ability and of excellent character.

Again, I beseech your Excellency to excuse me for troubling you about these diocesan affairs; but if you do not aid me, I cannot remedy anything.

The Lord has made me bishop to watch over my flock, and he has made you the protector to be able to repair scandals and to lend the weight of your authority as circumstances demand.

No more at present. With sentiments of profound respect I am your humble servant, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 476.

To Pope Clement XIII.

He thanks His Holiness for having published a celebrated Bull in favor of the Society of Jesus. — Eulogy of the Society.

[The year 1765.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Most Holy Father: The publication of the Bull [1] in which you extol and re-approve of the Society of Jesus has filled all good people with joy and especially me miserable as I am, for I esteem the Society very highly, having seen with my own eyes the great good that these holy religious are effecting everywhere by their good example and by their incessant activity. They are to be found actively engaged in the schools, the churches and the oratories of the congregations which they direct, in the confessional, in the pulpit; they give the exercises to nuns, and visit the prisons and galleys. I have seen all this during my stay at Naples.

The Lord has wished to try them by contradictions and difficulties during these latter times; but your Holiness, who is the Head of the Church and the common Father of the faithful, has consoled them, and by so doing has delighted us your children by means of the Bull wherein the Society of Jesus is praised. Thus you have closed the mouths of the evil-minded who wished to malign not only their conduct but the whole Institute.

But we, who have been called to govern our flocks and who have received so great assistance from these good

[1] *Apostolicum pascendi Dominici gregis munus.* It appeared, January 9, 1765.

religious, and I in particular, the least among the bishops, give most humble thanks to your Holiness, begging you at the same time to protect this holy Order. It has given to the Church laborers who have died for the faith and who up to the present hour have gained many souls for Christ in many kingdoms, not only among Catholics, but even among infidels and heretics; and it is our hope that they will continue to do so in the future, through the divine Goodness which *humiliat et sublevat* [humbleth and exalteth. — 1 *Kings*, ii. 7].

I humbly kiss the feet of your Holiness and ask your holy blessing.

Answer of the Pope, dated CASTEL GANDOLFO, June 19, 1765:

It was a source of no little satisfaction to us to learn from your letter what we already believed, that our Constitution approving of and confirming the Society of Jesus met with your warm approval. It pleased us very much to see that your praises of this Society corresponded entirely with what we had heard from many other venerable brethren. Venerable Brother, we cannot help admiring your love of justice, nobility of soul and the episcopal frankness, with which undeterred by human respect you have expressed to us your sentiments with regard to the said Institute and its members. . . . . As a mark of the great love we bear your fraternity, we give you from our heart the apostolic blessing.[1]

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xxv.

[1] Libentissime legimus litteras tuas, ex quibus intelleximus, quod etiam sine litteris arbitrabamur, Constitutionem nostram, qua pium Societatis Jesu Institutum laudavimus et confirmavimus, fraternitati tuæ jucundissimum accidisse. Gratissimum præterea nobis illud fuit, eadem te de illa Societate honorificentissime prædicare, quæ a pluribus aliis Ven. Fratribus episcopis per litteras nobis datas singularibus laudibus efferuntur. Cæterum tuum justitiæ amorem, et animi tui magnitudinem, libertatemque episcopo dignam summopere amamus, Ven. Frater, qui nullo rerum humanarum respectu

LETTER 477.

To a Brother of a Father of the Congregation.

Reasons for which in the Institute the sick cannot return to their native country.

Live Jesus and Mary!

SANT' AGATA, June 9, 1765.

My dear Sir: I wrote to you the other day, and you will remember, that I do not interfere in matters concerning the government of the Congregation, and much less in regard to what concerns the subjects; for it would be imprudent in me if I wished to direct from afar those affairs of which I neither see nor know the circumstances.

All that I can, therefore, do in regard to your brother, who I hear is suffering from certain effects of his mortal illness, is to send your letter to Father Andrea Villani. He is the Vicar-General of the Institute, and he governs in my stead.

You should know (for I wish to inform you) that it is an old custom in our Congregation never to send our subjects to their native country. The Congregation has houses in various places of a different climate. It takes counsel of the doctors, and sends its sick to breathe the air where it is thought best for them. To permit them to return to their native place would be greatly to expose them to lose their vocation. This loss is an evil which is regarded among us as worse than death.

Moreover, the Father Vicar, I am told, will leave Benevento [1] in a few days and go to Nocera; you can then easily speak or write to him.

deterritus, nihil veritus es de memorato Instituto, ejusque sectatoribus, per litteras tuas apud nos profiteri quid sentias. . . . . Et fraternitati tuæ, quam in nostræ caritatis gerimus sinu, Apostolicam benedictionem peramanter impertimur.

[1] The house of S. Angelo a Cupolo in the diocese of Benevento.

You should, however, be assured that the sick receive among us every possible care; and we do not mind expense if it is necessary.

Please accept the expression of my best sentiments.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 478.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He writes to him about various things.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, June 26, 1765.

I answer your last letter. Father de Paola would be, I have no doubt, a good Master of novices; but there is one difficulty; it is that in this employment he can no longer preach on missions, and when Father de Paola does not go out, his health begins to be impaired, he loses his appetite, and his color. In short, when your Reverence sees that he is beginning to grow worse, let another take his place. I believe that Father de Michele would also be good, perhaps even better.

I have not yet received any answer from Rome about the affair of which you know,[1] and I think that it will be difficult for me to obtain what I ask. Indeed, the authorities were not willing to accept the resignation of the Bishop of Lettere,[2] although he looks like a corpse. May God do what will be conducive to his greater glory!

In the mean time, keep the list of missions; probably they may yet be given during my episcopate.

It is greatly regretted at Sant' Agata that I must go to live at Arienzo during next winter. I regret this also, for at Sant' Agata are the cathedral, the chancery, and

1 The resignation of the episcopate.

2 The Bishop of Lettere, Mgr. Agostino Giannini, was born, June 20, 1685.

what is most important, the seminary. But, on the other hand, the last two winters that I passed there my health was bad, so that I was advised to go to Arienzo and to live in a house which I found at S. Maria a Vico where the air is not so damp as at Sant' Agata.

What troubles me most is that, if I leave Sant' Agata for several months, this city already corrupt, will become still more corrupt during my long absence.

I ask your advice on this matter in order that I may act with a safe conscience.

According to what Remondini says, my *Apology* [1] has been received with great favor; it has been spread everywhere and has been sought after with avidity. Notwithstanding all this, I have not yet had it appear at Naples. When I publish it there, together with an appendix which I lately added to it, I will send a copy of it to every one of our houses, and I beg your Reverence to have it read by our young men; for I wish them not to *swear by the words of a master*, and I am anxious that they should know how to refute the rigorists who might attack my work. But I fear that our own people will read every other work but my *Apology*. They will perhaps say, *I will read it later on*, and in the mean time, if any one makes an objection, they will not know how to answer.

Of this I have made the experience in the case of a certain Father, who came to Sant' Agata; hardly had he begun the reading of it when he stopped. The others will do the same, I fear; after that, when an objection is

[1] This work is entitled: "Apologia in cui si difende la Dissertazione circa l' uso moderato dell' opinione probabile dalle opposizioni fatte da un molto Reverendo P. lettore, che si nomina Adolfo Dositeo." (Apology in which is defended the Dissertation on the Moderate Use of Probable Opinion against the objections made by the Very Reverend Father Lector of Theology, who bears the name of Adolfo Dositeo.)

raised, as is to be expected, they will stand there with gaping mouths.

I bless you and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 479.

To Don Pasquale Diodato.[1]

He demonstrates the falsity of a proposition of Abate Genovesi.

[The year 1765.]

. . . . Things are not just as you say. Reflect and you will see that there is not a word in this paragraph that does not conceal poison.

How can one give an acceptable sense to these words: *the religion of the country*, when they are followed by this blasphemy: *although it may be false?* Hence according to this author, the man who would go to China and who would become naturalized there, would be obliged to embrace idolatry; and if he goes to Constantinople, he would have to become a Mahometan and defend the Koran! In other words, the author admits indifferently all religions or he admits none.

[1] Don Pasquale Diodato carried one day from Naples the treatise *De Jure et Officiis* of the Abate Genovesi and gave it to some young men of Airola to read. Alphonsus, having been informed of this at once stopped the reading of it, especially on account of this proposition of the author: *Preserve the religion of your country, and fight for it.* Pasquale pretended to explain this proposition in a good sense; but Alphonsus wrote him a letter in which he demonstrated to him his error. — Thus Father Tannoia. — The Abate Genovesi published, among other works, the *Elements of Theology* on account of which the teaching of this science was forbidden him by Cardinal Spinelli in 1751.

It is true that through fear or some other motive, he substituted for the words *religion of the country* the words *Christian religion.* But even this substitution shows his bad faith. Why *Christian* and not *Catholic?*

Moreover, there always remains a contradiction. For the words *although it may be false* permit one to ask which is that Christian religion, and to inquire whether one must embrace the religion of Luther, of Calvin, of England, or that of Zwingli. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xi.

LETTER 480.

To Don Michele N.

He gives him some advice in regard to conduct.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, July 4, 1765.

Very dear Sir: I received your letter and in answer I promise not to cease to recommend to the Lord you, your wife and your family.

Meanwhile do not neglect prayer and Communion, at least on all feast-days; and when you can make a little spiritual reading, do so.

Attend to the education of your children as well as you can, for now is the time when they are still young to imbue them with good principles.

That is all for the present. I beg you to pray for me and sign myself

Your very devoted and grateful servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 481.

To Don Francesco Andrea Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

Establishment of a convent of Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata. — Great fruits which the saint expects therefrom.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 25, 1765.

Very dear Sir: To-day, thanks be to God, I received the letter of Abate Puoti,[1] and he tells me that the petition for a monastery at Sant' Agata has been laid before the Congregation together with my report for its approbation of the opening of a new monastery with enclosure and for the assignment of a certain sum from the ecclesiastical chapels.[2] The Congregation has rendered a favorable decision *juxta votum episcopi* [conformably to the wish of the bishop]. The Abate Puoti is pushing the issuing of the decree.

I am very sorry that you will not come here for some time, and perhaps only after I have left Sant' Agata; this I intend to do after the feast of the Assumption. I beg you to pay me a visit either at Sant' Agata or at Arienzo where I am about to hold visitation and where I shall pass the winter.

Meanwhile, it will be necessary to defray the expenses of the transmission of the Bulls; for this reason I have sent

[1] Francesco Paolo Puoti, brother of Mgr. Antonio Puoti, Archbishop of Amalfi, was living at Rome; and it is there in 1762 he made the acquaintance of St. Alphonsus.

[2] For the foundation of this monastery of Redemptoristines, the saint had been authorized by the Sovereign Pontiff to deduct from the revenues of the ecclesiastical chapels an annual sum of 97 ducats (412 frs.), to which the King of Naples added 125 ducats (531 frs.) taken from the laical chapels.

word to Father Barbieri to advance me the money as soon as it will be needed.

When you arrive, we will consult as to the best way of setting the work on foot; as the income expected from *the chapels* will not be forthcoming for two or three years, the fees paid by the pupils will serve instead. Moreover, as I have already said, I promise to give during this time one hundred ducats a year to see this great work for the glory of God begun, by means of which I hope to transform this blessed city of Sant' Agata.

The prayers of this monastery have to convert it, for I see that all human assistance cannot do this; and it is certain that if the work is not carried out during my life, it will never be done. It might perhaps be done, but then it would turn out like all those foundations in the diocese of enclosed nuns who are a source of trouble to their bishop, to the families of the nuns, and to the places where they are established.

But if a monastery with the Rule of the Most Holy Redeemer comes into existence, it will be a source of joy not only to this diocese but to the whole province on account of the sweet fragrance which its members will send forth; your daughters will be more satisfied here in this monastery than are the nuns of Santa Chiara and of Donna Regina at Naples,[1] with their large income of two and three hundred ducats.

Now I beg you to take the trouble to see those who are to place their children here that matters may be pushed on; it does not matter that everything is not yet in the best condition; *on the road we can adjust the load.* All foundations are at the beginning in an incomplete state.

[1] The monastery S. Maria Donna Regina was founded in 1305 by Queen Mary, wife of Charles II. King of Naples, and daughter of Stephen IV., King of Hungary.

I am writing to the nuns [1] to tell them of the favor granted by Rome, that they may make their preparations.

I remain with all respect, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 482.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He desires him to come to see him.

Live Jesus and Mary!

SANT' AGATA, August 10, 1765.

I hear, my dear Don Andrea, that you have to go to Benevento. I beg you, be so kind as to come to see me, without fail, either in going or coming back. We shall regulate together the order of the missions that are to be given, and we shall do this so as to cause you no embarrassment. I do not pretend that my whole diocese should be all at once evangelized; but I should like, on the other hand, that the most important missions should be given. Enough on this point; we shall speak together about that, and shall regulate everything.

Till the end of August I shall live here; but at the beginning of September, I will go to Arienzo.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The Redemptoristines of Scala called to found the new monastery.

LETTER 483.

To the Prince di Centola, Member of the Council of the Regency during the Minority of Ferdinand IV.

He requests him to issue a warrant against a French bookseller at Naples, a vender of impious books.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, August 16, 1765.

I beg your Excellency to have the kindness to read this. I do not wish to speak of my own interests, but of the honor of God and of faith.

Signor Gravier, the French bookseller, in S. Chiara street, is doing very great harm to Naples. He is continually sending for books from France where at the present time, to the intense grief of all good bishops, books infected with atheism are published without restraint. He then sells them to all the people of Naples.

These pestilential works spread from the city to all the dioceses of the kingdom. As the sale of these works is incessant, the evil increases from day to day, especially as a saying is now current among the people to the effect that no permission is needed to read any forbidden books. I have learned that the bookseller has lately received a load of books from France.

As soon as I heard this I informed his Eminence the Archbishop of Naples, but I received the answer that he too deplored the fact and that was all.

Honored Prince, you by your authority and zeal can remedy this evil. I desired to write to your Excellency, as I know your zeal for the honor and glory of God. It is true that France is the birthplace of these works, but even there the court rigorously hunts them up and burns them. But the bookseller here in Naples sells them to every one. Why cannot this man's store be inspected from time to time

to ferret out and burn without mercy all these destructive and pernicious books?

Pardon me for speaking so warmly; but the ruin caused to our holy faith by these accursed books forces me to speak thus. I do not expect an answer to this, but I hope sincerely that your piety will apply a remedy to the evil.

With sentiments of profound reverence,

I am your devoted servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Sig. Azzolini of Rome.

LETTER 484.

To His Brother Don Ercole de Liguori.

He disapproves of a step which Don Ercole was about to take.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, August 22, 1765.

I do not think it at all advisable for you, my dearest Brother, to invite the Duchess of Telesa to your house even though Donna Marianna [Don Ercole's wife] should insist upon it, and this the more so, as your wife saw the inconveniences resulting from such a step, and said that she did not want the duchess. Though Donna Marianna should be willing and the duchess should come with great pleasure, she could not stay there a single day; remember the rank of the duchess and the smallness of the house at Marianella [1] where there is not sufficient accommodation to satisfy a lady of her standing. She would leave you suddenly, causing great pain to you and your wife, after sowing perhaps the seeds of discord between you. There-

[1] Marianella, a hamlet near Naples. Don Ercole had his country house there.

fore, do not think of carrying out your intention but think of some measure to save the peace of your household.

No more at present; I salute Donna Marianna for all here; I embrace you.

I remain your affectionate brother

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*Postscript in the saint's own handwriting*]: My dear Don Ercole, do not carry out your intention, for it will prove the source of the ruin of your life; this I maintain even though Donna Marianna should consent. I assure you, you will within three days experience what I have said, and then how will you be able to induce the duchess to depart?

As for the money,[1] I shall try to collect the sum next month; on account of the fine year we have had I have been forced to make several loans. But it is God's will. I embrace you and salute Donna Marianna.

Your affectionate brother

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of the Benedictine nuns at Teggiano (diocese of Salerno).

[1] On the occasion of his promotion to the episcopate, St. Alphonsus, as we have already said, had borrowed from his brother a large sum of money.

LETTER 485.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Zeal of the saint for regular observance. — Orders in regard to preachers.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, August 27, 1765.

My very dear Brethren in Jesus Christ: I am very much pained to think that the subjects of our Congregation have degenerated from their primitive spirit.

Hence I beg each one of you in future to watch carefully over himself. The relaxation that would creep in during my life-time would be insupportable to me.

If I mistake not, there is at the present time no longer the same love for poverty and mortification. Have we then entered the Congregation to lead a comfortable and easy life? If so, it would have been better had we remained with our families.

The obedience that is due to the Superior is no longer observed; now it will be all over with the Congregation when obedience ceases to be observed. If obedience be lost in our houses, will they not be turned into abodes of disquietude, of disputes, and of sin?

I have sent for the Father Vicar, Don Andrea Villani, and I have declared to him that I wish to be informed of all the grave faults that are committed, because I shall have every grave fault punished by severe mortifications, and I will order the expulsion of all those subjects that are found to be incorrigible. The Congregation has no need of a multitude of subjects, but it needs subjects that wish to become saints. It is sufficient that there remain to us ten that are animated by a true love of God.

We are too ungrateful towards him if, while he gives prosperity to the Congregation, we repay his goodness by faults and imperfections. Indeed, do we wish to be like so many others who are to the Church a cause of scandal rather than a cause of edification?

I have notified Father Villani that in his government he is too feeble and gentle; and I have declared to him that I wish to be informed of all important events. I therefore beg each one of you to make known to me all serious faults whenever, after having communicated with Father Villani, he finds that he cannot apply a remedy; for I shall find out a remedy, and it is for this reason that the Lord spares my life.

I recommend to the young Fathers not to allow themselves to be carried away by an excessive desire of preaching. I would rather have them seriously occupy themselves with becoming agreeable to God.

Let no one show a desire of preaching if obedience does not impose this duty upon him.

I beg all of you, and especially the young Fathers, to study well and to rehearse what they have to say in public, even when there would be question only of giving a short exhortation in the evening. We venture to speak without preparation, and afterwards complain that people say the preacher did not know what he was saying!

Let all young Fathers submit what they have to preach to some experienced Father, such as Father Caione, Father Rizzi, and others that are qualified. It is necessary that all those that have to preach, should be mindful, before ascending the pulpit or giving any instruction whatever, to study well and to read attentively their subject, so that everything may be orderly and solid, without far-fetched phrases, and the style may be familiar, which is the style of the missionaries.

Before all, we should mortify ourselves, and endeavor to

please God; otherwise God will not assist us, and we shall preach in vain.

I bless you all; but in blessing you I have in view only those that are animated by a good intention. As for those that are not thus disposed, if I do not curse them, it is God that will curse them and drive them out of the Congregation.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 486.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He recommends a priest for an ecclesiastical benefice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, September 7, 1765.

The death of the priest Don Giovanni Battista Letterese having caused a vacancy in the chaplaincy of the church of *Ave gratia plena* at Arienzo, and as it must be filled, I ask your Excellency to confer it on Don Paolo di Lucia, who fully deserves it. He is, in fact, the first of the suppressed chaplains, and for some years he has displayed great zeal and exactness as extraordinary vicar in this church.

I am persuaded that you will grant my request, as this priest is a man of exemplary conduct, one who is needed in a church where there are nuns.

I remain with profound respect your devoted servant.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 487.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He recommends obedience to the architect Cimafonte in everything that concerns the building.

[Beginning of September 1765.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

My dear Don Andrea, I understand that there are many points to be considered with regard to the house at Iliceto.

The first thing we have to consider, is that it is not advisable to give any cause of complaint to Don Pietro [Cimafonte] [1] who has kindly aided us gratuitously for so many years with no little inconvenience to himself. Don Pietro has said that if his plan is not followed he will regard himself as having been grievously offended.

I hear, moreover, that Fathers Fiocchi, Cimino and especially Mazzini [2] favor Don Pietro; for my part I say and have always said that in every difficulty, even the slightest, the directions of the architect and not of our Fathers, who know Moral Theology but not such matters, are to be followed.

As for the three large rooms, the workmen, it seems, have said that they can divide the ground-floor into rooms if we wish to have them.

It is not necessary to finish the staircase now; but enough of this; I am not well acquainted with the whole matter, but I do not think it good to undertake anything against the advice of Don Pietro. Hence it will be necessary for your Reverence to go to Naples to see him before departing from his orders; there you can settle the matter. I know that Don Pietro is a skilful man, one, too, who

1 All our houses had been erected up to this period under the direction of this skilful and pious Neapolitan architect.

2 Fathers Fiocchi, Cimino and Mazzini were Consultors-General of the Congregation.

knows the poor condition in which we are; hence I do not think he would persist in putting us to useless and exorbitant expense. . . . . (*Two pages are here missing in the original.*)

For the present, I do not think it well to make any change. Let people talk, the more so as I shall go to Arienzo within a few days; it is a quiet place and we shall stay eight or nine months. In case there should be question of making a change, you should send me another man as capable as the first; I for my part cannot think of any one.[1]

True, Signor Landi has taken us to task pretty severely, but I have given him a piece of my mind.

As for Cimafonte, I do not know what to say. The reasons you gave me would only serve to disquiet him; hence I thought it better not to answer him.

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 488.

To the Same.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, September 8, 1765.

My dear Don Andrea: I am greatly disturbed on account of this affair; meanwhile it seems as if the time of the famine had returned, during which all was confusion. *Two stories, large rooms, entering the kitchen through the refectory:* one says that it is to be raised *one* palm, another says, *six* palms!

[1] Perhaps there is question in this passage of a change of secretary. In a foregoing letter (Letter 404) mention was made about replacing Father Maione.

All that I can say is that the Fathers, following their own heads in this matter, have thrown away a round sum of money.

Even if all the Fathers are of a different opinion from that of the architect, it matters very little, for they have studied Moral Theology and not architecture.

However, to make sure of the matter, I have written to Iliceto to stop work, for I do not wish anything to be done contrary to the orders of the architect; this I tell your Reverence and all the other Fathers.

I understand that Father Ferrara has changed his opinion. Very well: whether that be so or not, it is neither prudent nor proper to go against the advice of a skilful man. [Don Pietro] Cimafonte is to go, as he promised, to Iliceto to arrange matters with the superintendent Onofrio; if he does not do so, then you have to engage another at a great expense.

I hear there are other difficulties. I must say I understand nothing about the matter, but even if I did, I should still say that the orders of the architect, and not of the Fathers, are to be carried out: if this is not done, everybody will blame us, the architect will leave us, and he will be right in so doing.

In conclusion, I repeat: it is necessary for you or for Father Ferrara or for some other Father, to see the architect to settle matters, and then do as he says.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] I am in hopes that if your Reverence instead of going to Iliceto should go to see the architect and should explain to him our poor condition, the need we have of rooms, etc., he would arrange everything as well as he possibly could. To build contrary to his directions appears

to me to be a foolish proceeding, and condemned before God and man.

Moreover, in writing to the architect some time ago I told him that his plans should be followed; hence it is necessary for you to see him, otherwise that poor house will be in such a condition that it will become uninhabitable.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 489.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He gives him the reasons why he dictated a grave measure.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, September 19, 1765.

My dear Don Gasparo: I have read your letter and I understand the natural affection which has dictated it. I see too from your letter, that you treat me as an imprudent and an unjust man.

Now, to discuss whether I have been so it will be necessary for us to see each other, as I cannot easily commit to writing what I have to say to you. Your Reverence might easily have known from the experience you have had with me that I did not act in a passion, the more so as there was no occasion for a display of passion. More I have not to say.

This affair has been gnawing at my heart for a long time and I bore up with it, thinking to go to Arienzo to make more diligent inquiries, to call him before me, etc., as your Reverence advises in the letter. But finally I could not overcome the scruple I had in allowing your brother to hear confessions. Could he continue to hear the confessions of souls and to guide them while he himself needed to be guided?

They were not, believe me, mere visits of civility to that

house; there was, as numerous inquires have proved to me, a dangerous union; hence I could not conquer the cries of my conscience.

I do not wish to make you believe that there was anything bad in it; what I say is, that it was dangerous. Now, as for his reputation, if he has lost it, he alone is to blame for it; for I told him through the archpriest, his friend, to abstain from hearing confessions until I should arrive at Arienzo, as I am going there to-morrow. Still to save his good name I gave him permission to hear confessions on one of two Sundays. Since he has seen fit to publish the matter, as I know he has done, I cannot be blamed.

Let me add that the whole affair was well known at Arienzo, for everybody was speaking of it; he was corrected and then obstinately wished to continue the affair. Now what reason has he to complain of me or of anybody else?

Certainly, if he were to leave Arienzo, it would be a very good thing, for it would separate him from the object of his passion, and it would free me from my scruples; if, however, he remains and carries on this intrigue, I shall find myself obliged in conscience to write to higher authorities, for, being a religious, he is not bound to obey me.

If your Reverence had known the pain and anxiety which this affair has caused me, you would not have written to me in that manner. I wish, too, to tell you that I did not follow my own head exclusively; I took counsel with a person of great probity and honor, and he told me that I could not without scruple allow your brother to continue to hear confessions.

I beg you before again condemning any one to *hear both sides of the story*. In truth, a bishop is to be pitied.

It is not true as you say in your letter that I knew this matter six months ago; still it is true that I gave him permission to hear confessions for an hour every fortnight.

I gave him this permission to save his good name, but I can assure you I did not do so without being greatly troubled in mind.

But your Reverence will say: *would it not have been better if you had called him to you and had told him that if he did not cease to frequent that house you would take away his faculties?* — Yes, my dear Father, that thought came to me also, but my conscience would not permit me to allow him to continue hearing confessions, and this with greater reason, because I learned that the person concerned went to confession to him. I have already taken away the faculties from another priest for this same reason and I have forbidden him to enter the confessional.

My dear Don Gasparo, what am I to do? Lately I wrote to the Pope to induce him to accept my resignation, but he will not hear of it. You cannot imagine how greatly troubled I am. I am always fearing that I do not remedy everything that can be remedied.

I repeat, I have acted thus in this matter (with the advice of another, as I have already said), because my conscience gave me no rest; I hope you will believe me. Would to God that I had had you near me that I might have had the benefit of your counsel! But scruples gave me no rest; I did not think that your brother would publish the matter, as it was entirely private.

One thing has weighed very heavily on my mind and that is the pain that has been given to your Reverence; but, you know, it is necessary to follow my conscience. I repeat that your brother was warned, but still he continued, and this awakened my strongest suspicions.

Rest assured that I felt bound in conscience to act thus.

I bless you and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

[*Postscript in the saint's handwriting*]: My dear Don

Gasparo, believe me, if he were my own brother, I would have acted in the very same manner.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 490.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He invites him to give a retreat to nuns.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 24, 1765.

I have received your answer.

The fear that the nuns might suspect any disclosure, proves to be unfounded; it would go to prove that I should no longer allow our Fathers to give them the exercises, since this suspicion is ever at hand; but, thanks be to God, I cannot for a moment suppose these nuns to be guilty of such ignorance and malice, especially since I have not discovered in any one of them formal and malicious attachment.

It is true, they are cold, there is little spirit of prayer and a great desire to go to the parlor; however, of late, thanks to the grace of God, they have restricted themselves to conversing with their near relatives, as they have now a good abbess and a good confessor. Besides, the first prejudices, the second, and even the third have passed away. In my opinion the poor Sisters have never heard the exercises as we give them.

Please come then in December, for I am sure that with the help of God they will derive great profit from the exercises.

I bless you and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 491.

To Don Francesco Andrea Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

The saint defends a right of the *mensa* (episcopal revenues).

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 30, 1765.

Honored Sir: Yesterday I wrote to you through Don Felice [1] to inform you that you might use your authority as soon as I should have ordered my tenants not to pasture their flocks any longer on the episcopal lands at Bagnoli.

To-day, however, I must tell you that I am inclined to doubt very much the assertion of the duke's chief overseer, as I hear that the eight ducats [2] are exacted by the *mensa* for the right of seigniory, which belongs properly to the Baron of Bagnoli, that is, to the bishop. Furthermore I am told that it is not the duke who pays the sum, but the tenant who leases *nomine proprio* [in his personal name] the right of seigniory of Bagnoli.

This being the case, I cannot see how the bishop can be prevented from pasturing his cattle on his own fief. Now to settle all difficulty, the overseer will have to show me an authentic document in which the agreement of which he speaks is to be found. Otherwise I am obliged to defend the rights of the *mensa* which in its quality of *baron* possesses both rights, that of pasturage and that of seigniory. I beg you, dear sir, to tell the duke's officers not to use violence, for I cannot in conscience yield any right without clear reasons for so doing; if violence be used I will have recourse to the Regents, and I hope they will not be unjust.

When Don Agostino arrives to-morrow you will learn

[1] The Abate Don Felice Verzella, secretary of the saint.

[2] 34 frs.

more of this matter, as he is of the same opinion as I. Present my respects to the primicerius.

I am with my whole heart,

Your devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I beg leave to add another point which favors my view of the question: this right of seigniory is now actually rented out every year by the *mensa;* therefore it can no longer be said that the eight ducats representing this right are paid by the duke for the grass of the fief.

After an old copy.

LETTER 492.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

He gives her some counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 1, 1765.

I have read with regret in your letter that your health is in a bad state; but remember that it is the will of God, to whom you should always be obedient.

Do nothing as long as you are not well, and obey the doctor.

Keep the Rule as much as it is permitted you to keep it, and let others say what they please. It is on the keeping of the Rule that your entire sanctity, your entire perfection, should depend.

When contempt is shown you, accept it with great joy, and offer it up to Jesus Christ; in this way you will make yourself like our divine Saviour, who has suffered all for your love, and in order that you may imitate him.

Do not think any more of the sins of your past life.

I send you a picture of the Blessed Virgin.

Recommend me every day to this tender Mother, just as I recommend you every day.

While blessing you in the Lord, I remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 493.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He requests him to speak to the Bishop of Sora about several important subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 25, 1765.

I hereby send your Reverence a letter written to me by the Bishop of Sora [1] in which he mentions the places where the missions are to be given.

Still it will be necessary for you on your arrival in the diocese to go immediately to Sora, for Don Francesco Rossetti, brother of the Vicar-General of the place, tells me that Monsignor has not as yet determined the places where the first missions are to be given, and that he has moreover sent for the missionaries of S. Giorgio;[2] they will arrive in April; so it will be necessary for you to see the bishops to settle what is to be done. And now I am writing to him to tell him that you will go to Sora and will be there at the beginning of December. If you should find yourself forced to start later, please write to him.

As for my *Apology*,[3] the bishop tells me that Father

[1] Mgr. Tommaso Taglialatela was a Neapolitan. He occupied the episcopal See of Sora from 1765 to 1768.

[2] Congregation of Neapolitan missionaries. Mention has already been made of them.

[3] The *Apology* of which mention is made in Letter 478.

Patuzzi's reply is wide of the mark; but that he himself entertains against my system certain doubts which he will write to me.

When your Reverence sees him please tell him to write me his doubts as quickly as possible as I am desirous to hear them, to retract if he convinces me; but I think it a very difficult thing to do as I have already read so many *works of the probabiliorists*, and not one has convinced me.

Moreover, it appears to me a very unlikely occurrence that Mgr. Taglialatela, after teaching for so many years the contrary opinion, should now change on the appearance of my work. Men of that stamp seldom retract. Some loophole is always to be found; it is sufficient for them only to reply to show that they are not convinced.

If he should question you on the point, use your prudence; do not cause him displeasure by contradicting him flatly; but on the other hand, you need not concede everything that he says.

The second day of Christmas-tide I expect the Fathers who are destined for my diocese; they will have to begin work at Airola, a very large place.

Now I wish you to banish from your mind the thought that my people do not wish to have the Fathers. The displeasure caused them by Father Maione, who is a little rough in his manner, does not extend to the other Fathers; the pastors and municipalities will have nothing to pay, I shall keep the Fathers at my own expense. I should like to hear something about the mission of Fratta,[1] and about Mgr. Borgia.

I bless you all, and especially the mission of Sora.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Fratta is situated in the diocese of Aversa. Mgr. Borgia had

LETTER 494.

To the Same.

He asks permission to resume his ordinary penances.

November 28, 1765.

I am writing about my own affairs.

I am not sleeping any longer on straw; I feel much better since I began to take milk. If you have no objection, I should like to sleep again on straw.

Moreover it has been necessary to close one of the two cauteries, the other remaining open.

I have begun to wear a small chain on the part where the cautery was closed to-day.

I ask your blessing.

After an old copy.

LETTER 495.

To Don Matteo Migliore, Parish Priest at S. Maria a Vico.

He points out some scandals and tells him what measures he should take.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[ARIENZO], November 29, 1765.

I have been informed that three young men of your parish are having illicit intercourse with certain married women, namely, Carluccio de Vita with the wife of Silvestro de Monte, Domenico di Lucia with another married woman, and Carlo Esposito with a third woman also married. The first named youth lives at Santa Maria di Loretto, the second at Ciumentara, and the third at the hamlet Papa.

I beg your Reverence to speak to them and to correct

been transferred from the See of Cava to that of Aversa, March 27, 1765.

them. I fear you will find it impossible to induce them to come to me.

At least make them tremble by telling them that if the bishop hears of their conduct he will report to the king and call in the troops at Montefusco, as he has done before this in the case of other delinquents.

Do what you can. — I bless your Reverence and remain,

Your affectionate servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 496.

To the Same.

The obligation of a parish priest to root out scandals in his flock.

[December 1, 1765.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I have read the answer which you sent to Don Felice about the relations of Carlo Esposito to Grazia di Palma, a state of affairs which will probably continue.

I do not understand what you mean when you say at the end of your letter that such people enjoy protection; if you will have the kindness to explain yourself I shall then be able to apply a remedy.

Moreover, I was not at all pleased when I read these words: *I have spoken and preached against this scandal and I have no obligation to return to it again;* because a parish priest must pursue scandal, even though he foresees the inutility of his efforts. The reason is that if the priest does not act so, the evil-disposed will pluck up courage to lead a life of sin, and the good people will be scandalized

when they see that the priest pays no more attention to the scandal.

I am not writing this to-day for the first time; you will find it in my *Moral Theology;* and on this point in particular I have consulted several learned men.

I bless you and remain,

Your very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 497.

To Don Francesco Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

He gives a favorable answer to a petition sent him by Don Francesco.

ARIENZO, December 7, 1765.

Having been fully informed of the needs of the monastery [1] we order that the first cutting of the woods mentioned in the petition [2] should be sold for the nuns. Let the

[1] The monastery of Redemptoristines already spoken of.

[2] The petition read as follows:

To the Most Illustrious Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

Don Francesco Andrea Mostillo, superintendent of works at S. Maria di Costantinopoli, in the town of Sant' Agata de' Goti, has the honor of laying the following points before your Lordship:

Monsignor, it is to you that we owe the approaching opening with the permission of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of a monastery of religious with strict enclosure. The present and future inhabitants should remember you with grateful hearts for this favor and for the indefatigable zeal you have shown for the increase of the patrimony of said monastery and for everything necessary to establish it on a solid footing. Now as the solemn entry of the religious and the furnishing of the church and house will entail a great deal of expense and as there is not sufficient money at hand, I beg your Lordship to crown all your favors to the monastery by granting us the first cutting of the three following chestnut groves,

respective administrators draw up the necessary document. The sale should be carried out with all necessary formalities and with lighted candle.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 498.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Another explanation of the severe measures that he has taken.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 8, 1765.

My dear Don Gasparo: The displeasure which you have felt with regard to this unfortunate matter has caused me more pain than anything else.

I assure you that I acted so in obedience to my conscience; and if your brother had not published the affair, it would have remained a secret and his honor would have been saved.

But even without my intervention, he would have been obliged to leave Arienzo, as he was not on good terms with the Prior who did not wish to have him in the convent.

Another step which your brother has taken does not show him to be a good religious; through an official in the seminary of Avellino he reported certain actions of a religious, who, as he supposed, had accused him. This, I repeat, was utterly unworthy of a good religious.

He has succeeded, too, in making your Reverence be-

that of the SSma Incoronazione di nostra Signora Maria, at Reullo, that of the SSmo Presepe also at Reullo, and lastly that of S. Maria del Carmine at Puzzillo. The wood is to be sold and the proceeds devoted to meeting the expenses of the monastery.

I am with the most profound respect yours devotedly, etc.

lieve that Don Felice [1] was one of his accusers, although I told him as I now tell you that Don Felice never uttered a word against Father Michele; on the contrary, he did his best to make me believe the very opposite of what had been reported. That is the truth; if one does not wish to believe my word, have patience!

Mgr. [Andrea Lucchese, Bishop] of Girgenti, has earnestly begged me to get the Life of Mgr. Cavalieri,[2] and though I have had diligent search made at Naples, I have not succeeded in finding it; I beg your Reverence to look for it at Contursi; I will pay for it. I say at Contursi, because it was published by Archpriest Rossi of that place.

No more at present. I bless you and all your subjects, and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 499.

To Don Ottaviano Rainone.

The saint grants him some favors.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 19, 1765.

My dear Sir: I have already received your remarks on the question of the benefice; Don Felice has explained it to me in detail.

As for the sum that reverts to my chancery, I allow you to retain one half, in order to afford you a little pleasure.

1 Don Felice Verzella was the saint's secretary.

2 The Life of Mgr. Emilio Cavalieri, Bishop of Troia and maternal uncle of the saint, was written by the Archpriest of Contursi Don Giovanni Rossi, about the year 1740.

I would willingly give you all, but the times are poor, and I am surrounded by so many poor people that I dare not do so. I have already written to Don Michele about the affair.

As my last letter went astray, I again grant you the faculties for which you asked me the other day. I repeat then: I give you all the faculties which you asked for, that is, to hear confessions and to give holy Communion in your private chapel.

I thank you very much for your kind Christmas greetings, and I pray the Lord to shower his blessings upon you. It pains me to hear that your brother is unwell; please give him my respects.

I am, my dear sir,

Your affectionate and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the diocese of Sant' Agata.

LETTER 500.

To Father Andrea Villani.

A subject is dismissed. — Recommendations in regard to a retreat.

Live Jesus, Joseph, and Mary!

ARIENZO, January 6, 1766.

Yes, my dear Father, I have dismissed N. N.

When I read the first letters, I thought of trying to help him; but having read his own letter, I saw that I could not keep him in the Congregation.

When you go to N. to give the exercises to the nuns, you should not touch upon Community life and the Office in

the evening. These points should not be mentioned, as it would cause great disturbance and lead to nothing.

I bless your Reverence and all your subjects.

After the Roman edition, which, however, gives the preceding lines as fragments of two distinct letters.

LETTER 501.

To the Same.

He speaks to him about various missions that are to be given.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 11, 1766.

Read the enclosed letter.

Those gentlemen of Naples, after having been served, are still angry. How much better would it have been had you come here and had left out Casalnovo![1] The most needy places would at least have had their missions. But the evil is without a remedy; the Cardinal complains, and you must necessarily go to Naples to offer your excuses.

You may tell him that you thought that it would be conformable to his wishes if you evangelized Casalnovo, and that finding yourself near this place, you had at once opened a new mission in order not to lose time.

If the mission really begins to-morrow, the 12th, you will very likely finish it on Sunday two weeks, the 26th instant. There remain yet fifteen days before Lent.[2] You could then on your departure leave me seven other Fathers to give two little missions which have been asked for, namely, one at Forchia, the other at Arpaia. The house for the missionaries is now ready.

[1] A hamlet in the diocese of Naples.

[2] In 1766 Quinquagesima Sunday fell on February 9.

When you go to Airola, let me have the book treating of the Jansenists;[1] leave it at the house.

As for Arpaia and Forchia, the Fathers will find everything ready. Four of them can go to Forchia, the other three to Arpaia.

I bless you.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 502.

To Don Francesco Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

He again defends the rights of the episcopal *mensa*.

January 13, 1766.

. . . . . If I could settle my conscience with regard to this point, I would yield and never speak of it again. God knows how I abhor lawsuits; I tremble when I hear the very name.

But what am I to do, after having taken the oath to defend the rights of the Church? . . . . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxx.

[1] Likely this book had for its title: "La realtà del progetto di Borgo Fontana." (Reality of the Project of Borgo Fontana.)

LETTER 503.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery of Camigliano.

He tells her to console a religious recommended by her.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 14, 1766.

I would willingly listen to that good religious; but at present the trouble in my chest keeps me confined to two rooms which I never leave, having restricted myself to a milk diet. It would therefore be useless for her to come here; for I should be obliged to hear her in the church, where I could not go.

Tell her for me that she should be satisfied, since it is evident that our Lord treats her thus for her own greatest good. Our first spiritual Father is Jesus Christ. He wishes that we should not leave the confessor that he gives us; and when he takes him away, he sees with displeasure that we are afflicted; for in him we must repose our hopes, and not in the confessor. Let her follow all the rules that her confessor has given her; and let her address herself to another only to become reconciled with God until she finds another director to whom she may intrust her whole soul.

This is all that I would say to her if she came here. She may therefore avoid making this trip, the more so since I know not where to lodge her; let her continual exercise be for the present to resign herself to the will of God.

As for the lady of S. Gaudioso, I do not leave my diocese, nor do I any longer go to Naples.

In regard to yourself, when you are in good health, continue to do that which I have prescribed for you; and when you are not well enough, lay aside the mortifications, but try never to omit prayer and Communion.

Be mindful of recommending me to Jesus Christ. I bless you.

Believe me, dear Sister,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 504.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He gives him his opinion on various questions relative to teaching.

ARIENZO, January 20, [1766].

I asked your Reverence in my last letter to try to hunt up at Contursi a copy of the Life of Mgr. Cavalieri (as there are none at Naples) because Mgr. di Girgenti is very anxious to have it.

I should like to know your opinion with regard to the Lector [professor] of Moral Theology, who, I hear, is a young man and often neglects to give class; perhaps he is in bad health.

The ablest member of the Congregation should be the Lector of Moral Theology, because it is our most important study. And then, what deference will the students show to a Lector who is as young as they themselves?

Moreover, I hear that there is talk of appointing as Lector of philosophy a young man, who is not yet ordained.

I repeat, I should like to hear your Reverence's opinion.

Moreover I wish to know whether the young men after finishing their novitiate devote two years to the humanities; (*in the original a line is here torn off*) the essential thing is that they know and that they understand rhetoric. If they are not well acquainted with the Latin tongue, they will

remain ignorant; if they know it well, let them perfect themselves in it.

Send your answer to Naples by Brother Francesco [Tartaglione] and write very clearly as the question of studies is very important.

I bless you and your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 505.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce.

Counsels of spiritual direction.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 23, 1766.

The woman came, and I heard her; but I could not go to the church, as I am not well.

As for keeping your room during this Lent, I say that you should obey the doctor, and act according to his orders.

In the same way nothing should hinder you from remaining in bed in the morning every time that you do not feel well; it is sufficient that you are not absent from the common acts when you can perform them.

Yes, great is the good that awaits us if we know how to correspond to the divine will. Let us sanctify ourselves, let us love God; the reward is incomparably great.

Pray to God for me; on my part I pray for you, and I bless you.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] Thanks for the pears that you have sent me; I beg you not to trouble yourself about such things.

After an old copy.

LETTER 506.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He asks him for various counsels in order to know clearly the will of God.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 15, 1766.

Mgr. Borgia is now beginning to set right these troublesome people. I have just received a long letter wherein he tells me that I am obliged in charity to give pecuniary aid to Father Caputo;[1] the latter promises to enter the Congregation again, when he is well, that is, when his weak brain tells him to do so.

In regard to the re-entrance of Father Caputo I told Monsignor that he should remember that the Congregation never receives such traitors.

I told him, too, that as for myself I was greatly troubled. Don Ercole[2] is growing impatient; he has demanded at least fifty ducats; and I do not know whether I shall be able to send the sum, as I do not wish to give up the missions for the month of May.

I wish your Reverence, as my director, to give me some advice on this point, to relieve my mind.

I experience the greatest repugnance to give even one *carlino* to Father Caputo, or to any one who turns his back upon the Congregation, for I wish that others may know what awaits them. St. Ignatius refused to treat even with common courtesy those who left the Order through their

1 Father Domenico Caputo had left the Congregation in 1764.

2 Mention has several times been made about the loan of money which the saint had made from his brother.

own caprice. But this very repugnance causes me great anxiety, for it appears to me that I should overcome it by aiding Father Caputo; God knows how I am situated now; I cannot do so at present.

Now I wish your Reverence to tell me plainly (I do not wish to know your reasons) *whether I should give him anything and how much*, that is, when I am able to give anything; or whether I should continue to tell him that he is dismissed, and that I will not even read his letters any longer. I ask you to do me this act of charity and to write frankly and clearly.

Signor Caputo wishes me to give him a monthly allowance of seven ducats, and asks at the same time for a hundred ducats to furnish his house. There is no doubt he is near the Home of the Incurables.[1]

We have already arranged matters with the Fathers of Benevento. I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

After having written my letter, I received the enclosed from two young men of Turin, who were thinking of entering the Congregation.

I have already answered them, giving them a short account of everything. I laid special stress on the fact that the question of the patrimony should first be settled; I told them to let me know about their parents, brothers and sisters, their health, age, studies, etc.; they tell me they have studied theology.

For my own part, I feel inclined to take them if the requisite conditions are there. Those who go far away to consecrate themselves to God and with no hope of ever again seeing country or relatives thereby give a good sign. Would to God that we had such subjects far removed from parents, who have taken away so many members!

1 The Home of the Incurables also received those persons who were insane.

Write me an answer as I wish to send it to these young men. Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 507.

To the Same.

Advice relative to the sending away of subjects. — He asks a permission.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 21, 1766.

I have already written a general answer with regard to the novice, and I am ignorant of all the circumstances.

Moreover, when any one has made the novitiate, he cannot be sent away without sufficient cause. Now the causes written me by Father Mazzini do not appear to be sufficient; in the same manner the cause alleged for the dismissal some time ago of a young man seemed to me insufficient, and I heard others complaining in the same terms. However, as so many circumstances enter into the case of this young man, follow the inspiration of God. It is necessary to be more careful in receiving subjects. This young man should not have been received on account of the condition of his sister.

Father Caputo's affair is settled, I shall act as you say. I thank you for having freed me from my troubles. I bless your Reverence and all the others.

Father Fiocchi will go as Superior [to the mission] of Sora. Tell him to try to please the parish priest Don Floro Capocci, who has worked so hard to obtain this mission.

Yes, my dear Father, if Father Caputo should give any

sign of wishing to enter again, we should not pay any attention to him.

As for the two young men of Turin, I told them to inform me about their parents, patrimony, etc.; when I receive their answer, I shall write to them more at length.

I insert here a matter of conscience.

Formerly, I was accustomed to take boiled beef in the morning without touching the first course, but having come down to one meal a day, I consulted Father Maione and he told me that I should also take a second portion.

Now I ask you as my principal director, in case the boiled beef should suffice, and the meat should be tender (for very often it is tough, and I cannot take sufficient, whilst on the other hand, I cannot take much bread, as it hurts me), to please dispense me from taking the first course; if you refuse, I shall obey. No more at present.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved tn the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 508.

To a Superior of the Missionaries at Naples.

He gives to the missionaries ample faculties for a mission.

Live Jesus and Mary!

ARIENZO, April 8, 1766.

Very Reverend and Dear Father: Your two letters are at hand, and I agree with everything you say.

I expect the Fathers here Saturday morning, and if all cannot come, as you have written to me, I expect at least your Reverence, to give me a little consolation and to tell you the important things about the mission.

I did not explain matters with regard to the faculties, as I thought that you and all the Fathers would take for

granted that I myself having once been a missionary had granted everything. Now I say that I give you all that I can, all, all, all by virtue of the chapter *Liceat;*[1] faculties to set right in case of necessity, invalid marriages, dispensation from vows, *impedimendum ad petendum*, hidden irregularities, and everything, everything.

I await you, and remain,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I forgot to say that the Fathers in coming to Sant' Agata, should not come by way of Durazzano which is called the road of the *flat stones*, but let them go via Maddaloni, travelling the road which is called *delli ponti* or *degli archi;* the road is splendid from Maddaloni towards Valle; when they arrive at the *degli archi*, let them take the upper road at the right hand.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 509.

To Don Francesco Andrea Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

He thanks him for having urged the construction of the monastery of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 27, 1766.

My dear Don Francesco: I have seen the new plans and prices and am satisfied; what affords me most pleasure is to hear that everything necessary will be ready for the month of June.

I say, everything that is necessary; for the double-doors within the monastery and the window-sashes, except those of the choir, can be made afterwards.

[1] *Council of Trent, Sess.* xxiv. chap. vi.

Hence I am writing to the nuns to be ready for the month of July.

It pleased me very much to find that you had increased the number of workmen. Many thanks for this.

As soon as I can escape from this place, and that depends on the weather, I shall go to Sant' Agata; for it appears to me that I have been a thousand years absent.

Enclosed you will find the plans, and I beg you to push on the work as quickly as possible.

Believe me to be yours truly, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 510.

To Don Michele N.

An answer to a consultation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 9, 1766.

Very dear Sir: I read your letter, and that very attentively. My answer is, that it is a very good practice to have prayer [in common in the church], but at the same time I must tell you that if the Ordinary thinks fit to forbid this he can do so.

I shall remember you and your family in my prayers. I remain always

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 511.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He asks him for a band of missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 23, 1766.

I have not written to you before this, as I did not know where you were, but now I must tell you that I need about eight Fathers to give a mission at Frasso, sometime in the beginning of December, for the peasants all go to Ducenza in November to do the sowing.

So please send them at the beginning of December; I should like to have Father Neri [1] or your Reverence as preacher; but I do not wish to put you to any trouble. If you cannot come to Frasso, it does not matter much, but it is necessary to send the eight Fathers for the mission; the country is in great spiritual misery, and for a long time has had neither missions nor exercises.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 512.

To the Same.

Various affairs.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, May 27, 1766.

My dear Don Andrea: I do not know the circumstances connected with the affair of Father [Francesco] Romano.

1 Father Nigro was also called Father Neri, or even Father Negro.

According to his own account (of which I retain but a confused recollection), it appears that he had very good cause for remaining some time at home, for (unless I mistake) the salary drawn by his father from a certain office had ceased.

However, I leave the matter entirely in your hands, as you are better acquainted with the circumstances.

The time for the mission of Frasso is set for the beginning of December. I should be highly pleased if your Reverence could come; but you have something to do at home, either giving exercises to the priests, or preaching the principal sermon.

As for those four wrong-headed nuns, send whom you wish.

On the 15th of the coming month, I shall begin the visitation of Frasso, and towards the end of the month, I shall expect the nuns of Scala; the morning they set out they will take their breakfast there [at Nocera de' Pagani] at my expense, as I wrote you in my last letter.

I bless your Reverence and all your subjects.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 513.

To the Duchess of Maddaloni.

He solicits aid in behalf of the Redemptoristine nuns.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, June 18, 1766.

Madam: On Sunday, the 29th of this month, with the help of God a monastery of the Nuns of the Most Holy

Redeemer of Scala of the strict observance, will be opened here at Sant' Agata. Now as great expenses have been incurred, and as our means are very slender, I make bold to ask your Ladyship for an alms, even if it be only a little wheat from the next crop.

I firmly believe and hope that these religious by their prayers, by the spiritual fragrance of their lives, and by the thorough education that they will give to their scholars, will be of the greatest service to our city.

I beg you, Madam, to lend a favorable ear to my request. Believe me to be with sentiments of deep respect, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 514.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

The saint returns to the same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, June 18, 1766.

I have written to the Duchess to ask for at least a little grain from the next harvest for the nuns of the new monastery at Sant' Agata, which, as you are aware, will be opened on the 29th of this month, the great feast of the Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul.

The nuns who will come here belong to the monastery of Scala, of the strict observance. As my means do not permit me to give much I beg your Excellency to use your influence with the Duchess that she may help on the grand work. I am firmly convinced that these exemplary religious by their lives and by the good education which they will give their scholars will render great service to the town.

I ask this favor of you and beg to remain with all respect, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 515.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Counsels in regard to the journey of the Redemptoristine nuns.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, June 25, 1766.

I understand that the nuns will arrive on Friday. The same day two Canons with two ladies from this place will be there [at Nocera de' Pagani] to receive them.[1]

As for the journey from Nocera to Sant' Agata, it will not be necessary to send a Father to escort them, for they have as you see a sufficient escort.

Please endeavor to get the Sisters to start Saturday morning, so that they may be able to arrive at Nola during the day; if they do not, our whole plan will miscarry.

Father Tannoia arrived here to-day; and I have heard of the fine things that are done at Iliceto.[2]

I bless your Reverence and all your subjects.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The foundresses of the monastery at Sant' Agata were Sisters Maria Raffaella della Carità, Superior, Maria Celestina del Divino Amore, Maria Felice de' Santi Chiodi, all chorists, and Maria Giuseppe di Gesù Maria, a lay-sister.

The two Canons sent to Nocera to accompany the nuns were Don Nicola Roberti and Don Luca Albanese; and the two ladies, Donna Emilia Vinacci and Donna Giovanna Rainone.

[2] He is referring most probably to the buildings in course of erection there, which did not please our saint.

LETTER 516.

To Don Michele N.

He excuses himself for not being able to render a service.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 8, 1766.

My dear Sir: I understand from your letter that a young girl of Ferino wishes to enter the monastery.[1]

I should have no difficulty in receiving her, especially as she brings a dowry of two hundred and fifty ducats, which would be a godsend to us, but how can I do this, considering how I am situated? There are many of this place who are continually pressing me to allow them to enter. Hence I feel almost obliged to prefer them to your candidate.

However, if I find an opportunity of admitting her, I shall not fail to let her know.

I pray continually for you and your family and for the intention of which you have spoken to me.

I am your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

[1] The monastery of the Redemptoristine nuns.

LETTER 517.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Eulogy of Father Corpo. — Details as to the monastery of Redemptoristines.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 13, 1766.

It pains me to hear of the illness of Father Ferrara. Fever and vomiting at this time make me tremble. Let me know very soon how he is getting along.

I have received the little book.

As for Father Corpo, all that I know is that he was received on account of his piety, for it was said of him at Cassano that he used to remain two hours before the Blessed Sacrament. His spirit of obedience while in the Congregation is known to all. It is well to collect now all the items possible.[1]

[1] Father Francesco Del Corpo, the notices of whose life St. Alphonsus advises to be collected was born April 9, 1727 at Cassano, in the diocese of Nusco. In the year 1751 he entered the Congregation, made his profession on the 13th of May of that year, and died at Pagani, July 4, 1766. It is evident from the deposition made by Father Fabiano Buonopane during the process of the beatification of St. Alphonsus that Father Corpo was highly esteemed by the whole Congregation; his words are: "I remember another prediction of the servant of God [St. Alphonsus], which shows what a superior guiding light he enjoyed in governing the Institute. Our Father Don Francesco Corpo wished to enter the Congregation and he presented himself to the servant of God. The Consultors-General made some difficulty, as they did not consider him fit for the apostolic labors; but the servant of God solved the difficulty by saying that he should be received, if not as an apostolic missionary, at least as a saint in the Congregation. He was received, and the result justified the servant of God's prediction; for Father Corpo lived and died a saint, and after his death even worked miracles." Thus far the deposition. The materials gathered according to the advice of St. Alphonsus are still preserved in the general archives and would furnish ample matter for an admirable biography.

No, dear Father, besides the mission of Frasso, there is no other; but this mission will last at least fifteen days; I am thinking too of giving there two missions, one in the upper part and the other in the lower part of the city; remember that at least eight Fathers besides a Brother will be needed.

The preacher [of the great sermon] may be either Father Melchionna or Father Neri.

To-morrow or the day after two girls from Naples will enter the monastery here [of the Redemptoristines], and in a short time five others from this place, everything having been arranged. There is a civil war on a small scale going on here, as entrance into the monastery is not to be given except to those who are of gentle birth; I am in the midst of the fray. Help me with your prayers.

As for the affairs at Iliceto, I leave everything in the hands of God.

I bless you and remain,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 518.

To the Same.

Request for prayers for his sister-in-law.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 17, 1766.

My brother Don Ercole writes to me that Donna Marianna, his wife, is so tormented by scruples that she is on the point of throwing herself out of the window. I beg you, therefore to recommend her to God, and to write to all the houses that prayers may be offered for her, considering that my brother is so afflicted.

Do not forget this recommendation, and pray also for me.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

Give me some news about Father Ferrara.

Believe me, dear Father,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 519.

To Don Nicola Pisanti, Governor of Arienzo.

He asks him to put an end to a public scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 30, 1766.

Dear Sir: I have the honor to inform you, as a matter which is quite certain, that a young man of S. Maria a Vico, named Andrea Daddio, son of Antonio, the betrothed of a person whose name is Angela Marchese, the daughter of Innocenzo and of Giuditta, takes his meals and passes his nights at the house of this young woman. The parish priest has several times notified him to marry or to leave that house (for that he certainly keeps up a wicked relationship with his betrothed is what I believe and what is believed by the parish priest, who came to me to-day, begging me to put a stop to this public scandal); but although he promises to marry her, he puts off the ceremony, and does not take the trouble to keep his word.

May it please your Honor to interfere in this matter, and to give orders to this young man, under pain of imprisonment, to leave the house and not to enter it till his

marriage. This is the only way to remedy so great a scandal.

Believe me, very honored Sir,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved at Rome by the religious of the monastery of S. Dionigi.

LETTER 520.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Reasons on account of which the Congregation is persecuted. — Remark in regard to the fast on Saturdays.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 12, 1766.

My dear Brethren in Jesus Christ: You see how the Lord visits us by sending us a multitude of tribulations and anxieties through our adversaries [1] who wish to see the Congregation annihilated; and we know not where all this will end.

Regular observance has much diminished, and God chastises us.

Let us hope that his divine mercy may not permit the destructiou of our Institute; but let us endeavor to appease God by our prayers and by avoiding voluntary faults, especially the faults against obedience, — faults for which we have deserved every kind of chastisement.

Among other things it has been remarked that the Congregation is thus afflicted since the fast on Saturdays has been suppressed.

Let us, therefore, endeavor to regain the protection

1 The adversaries were Don Francesco Antonio Maffei at Iliceto, and Baron Nicola Sarnelli at Ciorani.

of Mary in the present storm by resuming in all our houses the fast on Saturdays. The Mother of God will take care to preserve us from this general disaster with which we are threatened by the malevolence of our enemies.

With this hope, I embrace you and bless you all in Jesus Christ.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 521.

To a Daughter of Prince di Ardore, a Nun in the Monastery of S. Liguoro at Naples.

He recognizes in her an extraordinary vocation and gives her various counsels on this subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 31, 1766.

Before answering your letter I wish to speak to you of a case which is similar to yours, and which I now have in hand. I wish you, however, to keep this a secret; though you may mention it to your confessor.

Seven years ago while giving a retreat at S. Marcellino, a nun of this convent Donna Brianna Carafa called upon me and consulted me about her vocation to the Hermitage of Sister Orsola.[1] I inquired about the life and circumstances of the nuns; then I encouraged her to follow her vocation.

[1] The Venerable Sister Orsola Benincasa, whose virtues have been declared heroic by the Church (decree, August 7, 1793) founded in the sixteenth century, by the side of the *Theatine Oblates* the *Theatine Hermits of the Immaculate Conception.* The latter, to the number of thirty-three, live entirely in solitude and have no intercourse with the world. Their dress is white and blue, like the scapular of the Immaculate Conception, the origin of which dates back to their holy foundress. (Father Ventura, "Les delices de la piété.")

She afterwards obtained her confessor's consent, which she had not yet obtained; she wrote subsequently to the Pope; the Pope intrusted the affair to the Cardinal Archbishop on whom depends the entrance of Donna Brianna. But the nuns of S. Marcellino having heard of this project, did all they could to hinder its realization.

Let us now come to your case.

After all the circumstances which you make known to me, I regard your vocation to the *Hermitage* as more than certain. You have felt yourself drawn to a solitary life, and that for a long time; your first vocation, you tell me, even attracted you to the Carmelites, who also make profession of leading a life of solitude. I believe, moreover, that you are not obeying any sentiment of grudge or aversion towards your monastery; for if you left the latter to flee from the cross that it imposes on you, you would perhaps find in the *Hermitage* a heavier one which you could not carry. You wish then, I hope, to go there only to find God and to bid the world an eternal farewell. As a reason in your favor as you tell me, is that the Lord has called to himself the young girl who was an obstacle to your design. Here I take occasion to say that, no matter what may afterwards happen, do not charge yourself with the education of any child, for it is a very distracting charge to any one that wishes to occupy herself only with God.

From all these considerations and from those that you exposed to me, I concluded that in my eyes your vocation is true and certain; but I foresee difficulties as great as mountains.

Your relatives will make a noise; and when your Sisters in the convent hear of your intention, they will make a still greater noise.

Another difficulty will be the settlement of money matters with the monastery of S. Liguoro, which will not consent to lose your dowry, and which would even like to have your

life-annuity; now according to decrees that have come from Rome this would not be unjust.

Donna Brianna writes me from S. Marcellino that, in regard to the question of money, she leaves to her sister, a nun of the same monastery, fifty ducats of her life-pension, together with her dowry; for herself she takes with her to the *Hermitage* fifty other ducats, and S. Marcellino gives to the *Hermitage* sixty ducats annually. I believe that this arrangement was made by Rome.

Let us now come to the advice that you ask of me. Before all, try to obtain the consent of your worthy director; take no step till you have obtained it. You must afterwards write to the Pope to ask the authorization to carry out your design and to regulate the money question with the monastery. Finally, you should solicit the consent of the archbishop; for without him you can do nothing.

God is all-powerful, and when he wishes he will make everything easy. Hence I would counsel you to begin now the life of a *hermitess;* you should love the solitude of the cell and choir; you should discharge the offices imposed upon you; and the rest of the time you should spend in prayer in the reading of spiritual books. In regard to the parlor, you should keep away from it as much as possible.

We do not know what God wishes. Continue to prosecute your design, however, with the permission of your director; but who knows whether God does not wish you to be a *hermitess* even in the monastery in which you live by absolutely renouncing the parlor and all intercourse with your relatives, as was done at Donn' Alvina by Sister Sanfelice, a penitent of Father Torres? For then you would easily obtain the permission of your relatives and of the nuns of S. Liguoro in case they should not consent to your departure for the *Hermitage.*

I recommend you, then, to keep this matter secret; speak of it only to your director and to Father Pisanelli, [1] for if the nuns come to find out your design, they will thwart your plans at Rome with the Cardinal, or with your relatives.

I also recommend to you that in this matter you should act in a quiet way. If even things do not go according to your desires, if you see any of your measures fail, do not, I beg you, be troubled, for trouble never comes from God. You desire to enter the Hermitage only to please God; if then the Lord manifests some day that it is his good pleasure that you should remain in the monastery, you should remain perfectly at peace and say: *O Lord! it is Thy good pleasure that I wish and not mine.*

Meanwhile, we shall also see how the affair of the nuns of S. Marcellino will turn out; it will furnish us with light for your case.

Notwithstanding my own misery, I will ask for you at my Mass that the Lord may draw you entirely to himself.

Never forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ in your prayers, and above all in your visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be

Your very humble and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

[1] Father Pisanelli belonged to the Society of Jesus.

LETTER 522.

To a Priest of His Diocese.

The saint reproves him for having given bad advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 2, 1766.

I received your answer about that unfortunate man and I am surprised to see that you advise others to take revenge.

You say, it is necessary to punish the guilty as an example to others, but you must remember a priest is bound more than any one else to pardon and to counsel others to forgive. You should do this the more readily as I besought you to do it and still ask you to forgive; moreover I hear that your nephew, the priest, is willing to pardon as soon as you consent.

I remain your affectionate brother

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 523.

To Donna Maria Antonia Blanc, Pupil in a Monastery at Naples.

He counsels her absolutely to avoid a profane amusement.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 15, 1766.

I have received your letter.

I answer briefly and tell you that you must do your utmost to induce your parents to send you to the other convent [1] during this carnival; [2] especially as this carnival

[1] This seems to have been the convent of Donn' Alvina for noble ladies; they followed the Rule of St. Benedict.

[2] The carnival began on Epiphany and ended on Ash-Wednesday.

will last a long time. Then, no matter what it costs, you must ask the nuns to excuse you from playing a part in the comedy, as it would prove a source of great distraction to you in your devotions; tell them frankly that you are not obliged to take part in it, nor can obedience force you to do so.

I repeat, excuse yourself at any cost, otherwise you will endanger your vocation.

And now I advise you to make up your mind to go to the other monastery, as your present abode seems to me to be an assemblage of secular women rather than a convent. They can play their comedy and you meanwhile can entertain yourself with Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

It afforded me great pleasure to hear that you had refused a part in the comedy. And if you cannot succeed in going to the other monastery this carnival, do not be disturbed, but wait patiently for Lent; meanwhile, do not speak of your intention to those nuns, for if you do, they will give you trouble.

Courage then! Jesus Christ wishes to make a saint of you.

Oh, how much happier you will be in the other convent than all those nuns with their plays and their dissipated lives!

Jesus Christ is our only consolation; everything else is false and breeds remorse.

Pray to Jesus for me, as I do for you. I remain, etc.

ALFONSO,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] Tell that pupil that I shall recommend her to Jesus Christ and that she should leave the world if she wishes to save her soul; for in the world she will lose her peace of mind, especially during these times. I pray Jesus Christ to enlighten her.

After a copy.

LETTER 524.

To a Religious in the Monastery of Donn' Alvina, at Naples.

He announces to her the arrival of a young person. — Advice of the saint in regard to the recitation of the canonical Hours.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 15, 1766.

Donna Maria Antonia Blanc writes to me that her relatives wish to take her to the monastery of N. next Lent; but she desires that this might be done at the carnival, because the nuns at N. have the intention to give her a part in a piece that they wish her to play.

I have answered her that it would be better for her to try to go as soon as possible to your monastery, in which, thank God, no comedies are played. If she does not succeed in being there at the carnival, she may be able to go there in Lent, according to the promise of her relatives. I have exhorted her that by all means she should resolutely refuse to take any part in the comedy, as such a thing would make her lose her vocation. I hope that she will obey me, and I am confident that this young person will become among you a good religious.

In regard to what concerns yourself, there is no impropriety in occupying yourself in an employment that exposes you to many distractions. St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi used to say: *All that we do in the service of the monastery is prayer.*

Endeavor, however, to steal some moments to make your spiritual reading, to say some part of your usual prayers, if not all of them.

But above all, take care to fulfil the obligation of reciting the canonical Hours, and do not listen to those that pretend that a religious is not bound to say the Office in private

when she cannot be present in choir. This is a false and improbable opinion, which we cannot admit.

I am not rigorous in matters of opinion; but I cannot suffer opinions that are too lax. I should only admit the privilege which the nuns have of being able to satisfy the obligation of the canonical Hours by saying the Office of the lay-sisters, when the Abbess judges proper to grant this dispensation to a nun that is prevented by occupations useful to the monastery.

I recommend myself to your prayers, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 525.

To Don Germano Ungaro, Governor of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He recommends to him the cause of an innocent man.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 24, 1766.

Honored Sir: I understand that your Honor wishes to summon Don Francesco Antonio Iermieri on account of a quarrel with a certain inhabitant of Erecciulo.

Now as he was the one offended rather than the offender I beg you to let the matter rest or at least to treat him with all possible consideration.

Hoping you will excuse my importunity, I beg leave to remain

Your devoted and grateful servant

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of the Ungaro family at Cerreto.

LETTER 526.

To a Nun of the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He begs her to transmit certain advice to a nun. — Example of an extraordinary vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 27. [1766?]

I have been prevented from answering your letter sooner, and I now answer it.

I am pleased to hear that Donna Brianna Carafa shows courage and firmness, and that she obeys the Cardinal.[1]

She should not write to me, for I know that she is under obedience not to write to any one; and it is thus that she should act, otherwise the Lord will not aid her.

What I recommend to her is, that she should always endeavor to remain perfectly tranquil, and to abandon herself without reserve to the divine will. She must do all she can to obey God, and to follow her vocation, but she must do all with a peaceful mind. If she acts thus, I am confident that God who is all-powerful will give strength to the Cardinal, and help her to overcome all difficulties.

What would displease me would be that, because matters are not expedited as soon as she desires, she should grieve

1 Cardinal Sersale. — As we have seen in the letter of October 31, 1766, Sister Brianna Carafa wished to leave the monastery of S. Marcellino in order to retire to the *Hermitage* of the Venerable Sister Orsola Benincasa. St. Alphonsus since 1759 had approved this extraordinary vocation which, however, could never be realized. Sister Carafa was subjected to various trials; but at the beginning of 1767 could renew with the holy Doctor a correspondence which had for several years been interrupted. We may read further on numerous letters addressed by St. Alphonsus to this chosen soul of whom he one day said while speaking to a priest, Salvadore Tramontano: *She will be one day, I hope, a great princess in Paradise.*

much, begin to complain, and become disturbed. If it thus pleases God, she should also wish with her whole heart all that God wishes or permits; otherwise she would show herself attached to her own will.

Still, what I say should not prevent her from always speaking courageously to the Cardinal, and always repeating the words: *Your Eminence, I feel myself called to lead the life of a recluse, and I desire such a life only in order to do the will of God.* And if the Cardinal replies: But it belongs to the Superiors to know what is the will of God; she should say: *I agree, but I feel myself called to this kind of life, and as far as I am concerned, I do not wish to refuse to obey God's call.* If she speaks in this way, I do not see what answer could be given by the Cardinal, who is otherwise a man of a delicate conscience.

Communicate this letter to Sister Carafa, and tell her that she should recommend me to Jesus Christ; this I do every day for her as well as for you.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 527.

To Pope Clement XIII.

He humbly expresses his desire to resign his bishopric.

[Towards the end of the year 1766.]

Most Holy Father: As the Lord has sent me new sickness, during which I received in the month of August Extreme Unction,[1] humbly prostrate at the feet of your

[1] In a letter addressed to Don Giuseppe Remondini, September 12, 1766, the saint speaks of a severe illness, "in which," he says, "I received the last sacraments; but thanks be to God I recovered."

Holiness, I beg you to accept my resignation of the See of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

I am now seventy-one years of age and on account of a chest trouble I am obliged to remain within doors during the winter. Hence I desire to return to my Congregation to prepare myself for death, which is not far off.

As I wish to see the little good which God has been pleased to effect by means of a miserable instrument like myself maintained in the diocese, I beg you to appoint to this See Mgr. Puoti, Archbishop of Amalfi, where he suffers very much on account of the sea air. But my principal reason for wishing to see him appointed is that he is a prelate of great zeal, and firmness. During my late illness I intended to speak to you before my death about Mgr. Puoti. But if your Holiness wishes to appoint another, I am still willing to resign.

If your Holiness deigns to accept my resignation, I place it unreservedly in your hands. Should you, however, decide that though old and infirm I should continue to govern this diocese, then I wish to die under the yoke in order to do thereby the will of God.

Awaiting meanwhile the decision of your Holiness, I most humbly kiss your feet.

Your most humble, devoted and obedient servant

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 528.

To a Scrupulous Person.

A series of letters in which, with admirable charity, the saint exhorts a soul to confidence in God, to obedience, and to contempt for scruples.[1]

[Anno 1766?]

I.

I am going to say Mass now; doubt not, I will fervently recommend you to Jesus Christ and to the Blessed Virgin.

Continue to pray to the Blessed Virgin and say to her with St. Bernard: *In te, Domina, speravi: non confundar in æternum.* [In thee, O Lady! have I hoped, let me never be confounded]. For my part, I will ask of her the same grace for you and for me. I send you a little picture of the Blessed Virgin; always carry it about with you.

I do not remember having received your letters; but if I received them, I certainly answered them. Continue then to write to me; for I very much desire your eternal salvation.

Send your letters and take mine through Brother Francesco [Tartaglione]. I bless you as Pastor of the Church.

II.

I answer you briefly, for it is night, and I must not keep the messenger waiting.

I agree to pray for you during eight days in a special manner. But you must do violence to yourself during that time and go to confession. This I ask of you, and if necessary, I command you in the name of the Blessed Virgin.

[1] We do not know whether these letters are entire. Some of them are perhaps only fragments. We give them such as we found them in an old copy left by the priest Don Salvadore Tramontano, a great friend of St. Alphonsus and of Father Tannoia.

Do not lose courage. Throw yourself into the arms of the divine mercy. Continue to recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin, and pray to her also for me. Come now! take courage and be cheerful.

III.

Go to confession, and it matters little whether you believe it certain that you are surely committing a sacrilege.

I will go so far as to say: commit this sacrilege, and receive absolution on my responsibility. I certify that you will thus secure your eternal salvation, for you will not commit a sacrilege, I am sure.

IV.

When shall I have the consolation of hearing that you have gone to confession? I continue to pray for you.

In order to take the resolution you will have to do violence to yourself. Go then at once to confession without further reflection, and say to yourself: *I do not know what to do, but I am obedient in all that has been told me by so many priests and by Mgr. de Liguori who commands me in God's name.*

Indeed, I command this in the name of God, and for the sacrilege which you believe that you are committing by going to confession, I take upon myself all responsibility before God.

V.

I have read your letter.

All that has happened is nothing; it suffices that you do now what I have so often repeated to you: first, throw yourself into the arms of the infinite mercy of God who has not yet abandoned you; then put yourself into the hands of a confessor, whoever he may be, with the firm resolution of absolutely obeying him.

If you had done that sooner, you would have spared yourself all these difficulties. Courage, then, in the name of Jesus and of Mary, and go to confession. You fear, while going to confession to multiply sacrileges; do you not see that this is a trick of the devil, and that by not confessing you sink deeper?

For pity's sake, then, hear me for once: go to confession. Lost or not lost, go to confession! I assure you, on the contrary, that if you confess you will be saved; since far from loving sin, you hate it, and this is a proof that the grace of God is yet sustaining you.

Come, then! at the very moment when reading this letter recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin; then make an act of contrition with the firm purpose of no more offending God; and then make up your mind to go in search of a confessor this very day, or at the latest to-morrow; but better to-day.

God has permitted this new fault in order that you may the better see through the tricks of the devil. *Omnia co-operantur in bonum.* [All things work together unto good. — *Rom.* viii. 28.]

Courage! in the name of God, call upon your confessor and receive my blessing. *God never rejects a soul that humbles itself, that repents and obeys.*

VI.

I read your letters, I do not tear or burn them; but they always give me pain, for although you wish to come to a decision, you never decide. Say no more: *I cannot;* say: *I will not, I will not, I will not.*

Jesus Christ has said: *Qui vos audit, me audit.* [He that heareth you, heareth me. — *Luke*, x. 16.] And this is the resolution which you should take and you should say: *I wish to put myself into the hands of a confessor, whoever he may be, and do what he tells me.* For

you should be convinced that you have lost the use of reason.

Yes, certainly, I am praying for you; but on your part take a resolution. Come, now! fall on your knees at once and make a vow to the Blessed Virgin that you will immediately call upon the first confessor that comes, and that you will do all that he tells you, and thus you will be saved.

On your knees, then, and make this vow.

VII.

You wish to listen to the enemy and not to me.

It matters little that you fall back into sin. The sin having been committed, always go to your confessor, even if it were a thousand times, and a hundred thousand times, and do what he tells you.

Go then to see your confessor to-morrow, and if possible, this very day; and do so each time. He will not send you away, and if he sends you away, try to find another.

But you must obey. I have told you a thousand times: *only obedience can save you.*

Hasten then to write to me that you are going to seek for a confessor; in the mean time, I will pray to the Blessed Virgin to your intention.

VIII.

You cannot imagine how much the last letters that you have written to me have pleased me. For this I unceasingly thank the infinite Goodness of God and the clemency of Mary, our heavenly Mother. Yes, it is Mary who has done that, and it is she who is to continue it.

I hope that you will return to Naples without delay; for I like you to be near your spiritual physician through whose care God has deigned to cure you.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ. I for my part will pray for your perseverance.

IX.

You will serve God but little to have confessed if afterwards you do not do what the confessor tells you.

You must obey your confessor in everything, and when he tells you to go to Communion, you must do so, even if it seems to you that you are in the state of sin. Your head is worse than the head of a young chicken, for it is full of confusion, and you regard as a sin what is not a sin.

For the rest; I am happy that you have gone to confession, but as for the sins of which you speak, I do not regard them as such.

Rest assured, I will pray and will have others to pray to the Blessed Virgin for you; but you must resolve to do what your confessor says without allowing yourself to reflect or to study, as you say, the means that you are to employ. You must walk blindly without examining whether you are acting rightly or wrongly; you should say *I am foolish, I have lost my head, I can no longer believe my senses.* Then do what your confessor enjoins upon you without knowing what you are doing.

If the scrupulous do not act thus, none of them will any more confess or communicate, for everything appears to them to be a sin and a sacrilege. Now, blind obedience is praised by all theologians, by all the holy Fathers, by the whole Church. Practise it, and you will be safe.

X.

You have consoled me and saddened me at the same time.

But you do not wish to listen to me when I say to you not to believe your own head. What has injured you has been the doubt whether your confession was good.

For pity's sake, call at once upon your confessor, and if you have fallen a thousand times, go a thousand times to see him, receive absolution, and bow your head by submitting it to what your confessor says without replying that your confession is good for nothing.

Think that only obedience can and must save you. What do you wish to do? Do you wish to begin again to live as in the past without confession, without communion?

Hasten to write to me that you have again confessed and communicated. In the mean time I shall continue to pray to the Blessed Virgin.

I bless you, and remain, etc.

XI.

What pleasure do you afford me by telling me that you continue to receive Communion! But I do not like the sequel of your letter nor all the frivolous terrors to which, it seems to me, you are still abandoning yourself; all those apprehensions, the author of which is the devil, make me fear that you are again going to give up Communion. You tremble for your past life; I tremble for your future, for I fear that you will return to your old ideas, to *I cannot, it is not possible, etc.*

I assure you, on the part of God, that you are in the grace of God.

And if you ever should confess to me, I would forbid you formally, under pain of grievous sin, ever to say a single word about your past life, and that in spite of all the doubts that you might have.

But if you do not wish to obey me, say at least to your confessor in my name that he should intimate to you this prohibition, and that if you wished to speak of the past, he should absolutely forbid this to you.

I have often told you, and I again mention, that God wishes you to be a saint, and not only a man who is saving

his soul; this is also what I firmly hope to obtain from the Blessed Virgin to whom I have so many times recommended you. During one of the past nights when I could not sleep I did nothing else but recommend you to Jesus Christ and to the Blessed Virgin; I will continue to do so the rest of my life, and I will do so even in heaven, if I save my soul, as I hope through the merits of the Precious Blood.

Write to me from time to time, and console me by letting me hear that you are continuing your Communions. That is sufficient.

I should not, moreover, like you to confess too often, for the fact of preparing yourself for confession renews in you without ceasing the fears and scruples of which I have forbidden you even to think. It suffices that you receive absolution once a week, and the rest of the time continue to go to Communion.

Unceasingly give thanks to the Blessed Virgin for the favor that she has granted you.

Tell also your confessor that I do not wish you to confess too often, and ask him in my name positively not to listen to you if you speak to him of the past.

The devil now concentrates his efforts on one point, namely, in order to oblige you to turn back, he wishes to trouble you once more and to persuade you that you are not on the right road. Believe me then, and have confidence in the word of your confessor and in my word; now all goes well.

Devote yourself to loving Jesus Christ and ask him for perseverance, and you will be safe; of this I assure you on the part of God. Do not forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ in your Communions. I bless all that you do and all that you will do; but when you write to me, do not speak any more of the past; I forbid you to do so.

XII.

I wish to see who will gain the mastery, you or God; you who wish to damn yourself, or God who wishes to save you.

Courage then! what is done is done. Go humbly to seek your confessor and say to him: *Have pity on this poor fool*, and be obedient.

Do you not see that when you obey you are in a good state and in the grace of God? There is no use in doubting this, for I can certify to it.

Hasten then; go courageously and joyously to call upon your confessor, and obey.

If you had acted so in the height of this storm of scruples, you would not have suffered any injury. Come now! think no more of the past, think of the future.

Do you wish, then, voluntarily to create for yourself a hell in this world and another in the next? Jesus Christ is waiting for you; go then to-morrow and seek your confessor, and if he is not in the church, go to his house. He will not repulse you, be sure of this, and your bad habit will only inspire him with compassion.

I bless you and recommend you to the Blessed Virgin. When I say your bad habit, I mean the habit which you have contracted in regarding yourself as conquered.

As to your scruples, you should know that you are by no means obliged to make an entire confession of your past sins.

Obey then your confessor when he tells you not to speak of the past; it matters little whether you certainly remember that you have not explained many necessary things.

Tell this to your confessor, he will certainly approve of this doctrine, for a number of theologians profess it.

Now this doctrine, without doubt, is applicable to your

case, since experience proves that scruples relative to the past are for you, an occasion of ruin.

It is, therefore, enough for you to confess the sins committed since your last confession, and nothing more.

XIII.

You begin again to make me tremble with your fear that all your confessions and Communions are sacrilegious.

But, O my God! do you not see that it is thus that the devil has deceived you in the past in making you believe all your confessions and Communions to be sins and sacrileges?

But you will say, *What must I do if I have this fear?* What you are to do? You should believe what I and so many others have told you that in these matters of doubt and in troubles of conscience you are foolish, extravagant, incapable of forming a judgment.

This is what you should believe.

You must then confide in what has been told to you. For myself, I repeat to you in the name of God, and your confessor will tell you the same thing: continue to communicate notwithstanding all your doubts, however strong, however obstinate they may be. And do this on my responsibility; yes, I am answerable for this to God, for your conscience is substantially known to me.

I will add one thing, namely, that you are certainly obliged under pain of mortal sin to conquer your scruples and your fears in order to do what your director tells you; for if you begin to omit Communion, you will fall back into the unhappy state in which you have been in the past, and why did you fall back? Because you did not wish to listen either to your confessor or to me.

As long as you have not committed *any quite recent* and *new sin,* which is *evidently mortal, to which you have given*

full consent, and which was fully deliberate, always receive Communion without going to confession.

I say a sin *quite recent;* for as to the past, you must absolutely say no more about it in your confessions.

In view of the state of your conscience you are, I hold for certain, not obliged to attend to material integrity. For a greater reason do I forbid you to confess the acts of your past life, — acts in regard to which you are not certain whether they were mortal sins, or whether you accused yourself of them, at least in a general way. Hence take care not to say a single word about your past life.

I should also like your confessions to be rare; they should be at the most weekly confessions; and always communicate on my responsibility in spite of all your fears of committing sacrileges.

I repeat, you are obliged under pain of grievous sin to do what I say; and if you were here, I would prove to you, book in hand, that this is the common teaching of the theologian, a teaching most applicable to your conscience, which is well known to me.

Those fears that torment you will likely have to be borne by you till your death; but you have only one thing to do, namely, walk blindly and do what is told you; for I repeat, your mind is deranged on this point, and you are no longer capable of forming a judgment on your conscience or on your impressions. The devil has laid snares for you in the past, and you know whether you have fallen into them.

Preserve this letter, I beg you, so that you may no more speak to me about sacrileges. I repeat, in your tribulations, read my letter, and take courage. I see clearly before God that by acting thus you will be walking on the right road and you will become a saint; by acting otherwise, you will run the risk of losing your soul, as more

than one have done, because they did not wish to submit their judgment to the judgment of others.

I bless you, etc.

After an old copy.

LETTER 529.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He asks him to furnish the money needed by the missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 2, 1767.

Reverend and Dear Sir: When the Fathers lately passed through here I gave them thirty ducats for the expenses of the mission. Now they have just written to me that their own expenses joined to those that had preceded their arrival had nearly exhausted their own resources. I therefore beg you to call Father Villani, the Vicar, and to give him as much money as he needs either to finish said mission or for anything else that may be required. I will then at once have the money refunded as soon as I hear from you.

Please render me this service. I recommend myself to your prayers, I impart to you my pastoral blessing and remain

Your very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 530.

To the Priest Don Pasquale Mauro.[1]

He nominates him vicar forane.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 29, 1767.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Since your uncle, the parish priest of Luzzano, on account of his advanced age and the continual troubles from which he suffers cannot exercise the duties of the office of vicar forane,[2] I have thought of availing myself of your most worthy person for this office, because I do not doubt that such a choice will turn out to my satisfaction in view of your ability, fidelity,

[1] Don Pasquale Mauro, became later on Archpriest of Durazzano. Called to depose in the quality of witness in the cause of the beatification of our saint, he thus expressed himself: "The venerable servant of God had just been chosen Bishop of Sant' Agata, I at once heard so many favorable things of him that on his return from Rome to Naples, I went in company of one of his penitents, who was a priest to offer him my respects. As I told him that though I was his subject and diocesan, I lived at Naples where I was studying medicine, 'Return to my diocese,' he answered, 'I wish you to devote yourself to the service of the Church and of souls.' I obeyed; I returned to Moiano, my native place, and I afterwards visited the servant of God. He told me to study well Moral Theology, and made me a present of a copy of his theology; after my priesthood, he called me again, gave me a good instruction on the manner of hearing confessions, and granted me the necessary powers. Three years later, I obtained at a *concursus* my parish of Luzzano, and I was afterwards appointed to the office of vicar forane, and charged with informing the prelate, at least twice a year about all that concerned my office. I had thus frequent occasion to see him and to converse with him; and every time that I had the honor of speaking to him, I conceived for him the sentiments of the most affectionate veneration."

[2] Vicar forane (*foraneus = qui foris est*); one exercising authority *at a distance* from the place where the bishop resides.

and prudence, as I am also persuaded that this will meet with the approval of the clergy. I therefore grant you all the faculties necessary to discharge the duties of this employment, begging you to manifest your zeal and to be attentively vigilant not less over ecclesiastical affairs as over secular scandals, so that you may not have to give an account to the eternal Judge for having been silent, and I for not having done my duty.

Confiding therefore in your goodness, and recommending myself to your prayers, I send my regards to your uncle above-mentioned, to your father, and impart to you my pastoral blessing.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Your very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 531.

To One of His Diocesans.

He announces to him that he has granted one of his petitions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 9, 1767.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I have just now received your letter together with the petition of Signor Don Giovanni Mango and Oropalco, which I at once handed over to my Vicar to write out for you the competent rescript to serve your Reverence and to please the Superiors.

I wish to have the honor of having other orders from you so as to show you in the prompt execution of

the same the esteem in which I hold your most worthy person.

Giving you my pastoral blessing, I remain

Your most affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the episcopal palace of Verona.

LETTER 532.

To Father Giuseppe Melchionna.

He encourages him in his labors, and asks for information about a work.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 3, 1767.

I send you a hurried answer, because it is nearly eight o'clock in the evening.

I have read about your trials: what can I say? Do as you have written to me, and let the superior part of the soul assist you. Be, however, assured that the little that you do in the midst of so much anguish will be more agreeable to God than if you did it in the midst of a sea of sweetness and tenderness.

During this year you have run a good course, I thank the Lord for having given you the strength. What do you wish? It is the will of God that you should labor and serve him in the midst of pains and aridities. Cast yourself into the deep wound in the side of Jesus Christ; it will be sufficient for you to say from time to time: *My Jesus, help me; my Mother, help me!* Do not doubt that Jesus and Mary wish you well; of this I can assure you.

I have given the order for the magnesia. When I have it I will send it to you, as it is not always prepared beforehand.

Two volumes of Father Benetto Cipriano [1] have been sent to me. He treats of the power of the Pope; but I have not found the place where he speaks professedly about the infallibility of the Pope.

See whether he does not speak of it in the third volume. If he does, send it to me by way of Naples. But probably he speaks of this question in various places of the two volumes which I have, but does not do so in a separate treatise.

I embrace you and bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

LETTER 533.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

Utility of contradiction.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 13, 1767.

I have read your whole letter. What can we do? When we live in a Community we are exposed to mortifications. But all this may work together for our own good: *Omnia cooperantur in bonum* [All things work together unto good. — *Rom.* viii. 28]; for if the things are true, they will serve to render us more reserved and attentive; and if they are not true, they will do us still more good, since we receive these vexations from the hand of God and offer them to our Lord.

[1] Father Cipriano Benetti of the Order of St. Dominic, a writer of the sixteenth century, has left among other works this one: "De prima Orbis Sede, de Concilio, de ecclesiastica potestate, de Pontificis Maximi auctoritate." (The First See in the World, the Council, the Ecclesiastical Powers, the Authority of the Sovereign Pontiff.)

I beg you to conduct yourself with all possible kindness and courtesy towards those who you suppose have accused you of some fault. I well know that you are capable of doing all this yourself; but I thought it might be well to beg you to do so, so that you may be more mindful of it.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ.

I embrace you and bless you, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 534.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He refuses a Lenten preacher the faculty of hearing confessions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 15, 1767.

Very Reverend and dear Sir: In regard to the letter, that is a matter which is understood.

As to the preacher do not make me repeat a thing a hundred times. Since I feel a scruple in this matter I declare to you, though if the Pope himself should tell me to do so, I would say to the Pope: *Your Holiness may give him the power, but I cannot approve him without examination.*

I believe him to be a Father of very good morals, a saint, an excellent religious; but to hear confessions, sanctity is not sufficient, nor is sufficient the ability of preaching good sermons; for the hearing of confessions is a special science. In regard to this there are some that are laboring under an illusion when they believe that he is able to hear confessions who preaches well.

God knows how much I esteem the Carmelite Order. St. Teresa is my patroness, and when I was in the world I always frequented the Carmelite churches. My mistake

has been to authorize him to preach before asking him whether he wished to be examined.[1]

Henceforth I shall exact of all preachers who come that they be examined for hearing confessions; otherwise they will not be admitted.

I except only those who I know otherwise are experienced in the practice of hearing confessions, as pastors and missionaries, because they study Moral Theology; but certain religious strive to preach good Lenten sermons, and study but little the science of Moral Theology. Hence, in future, I shall admit without examination no religious, — none, none, none.

I cannot go to hell for any one. I am a bishop in spite of myself; I should, therefore, be doubly foolish if to please others in the diocese, I should put my soul in peril.

Make those who complain understand what I have written in this letter.

Nothing more. I bless you, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 535.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He desires to see him.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 25, 1767.

Yes, I have received your letter, and I am informed of everything.

In respect to the Rectors, this is a matter of no little

[1] To form a fair judgment in regard to this severity shown by St. Alphonsus, we should know that the study of Moral Theology was very much neglected by the religious who did not directly occupy themselves with the ministry. The exclusions pronounced by the holy Doctor were, however, particular facts, which by no means injured the reputation of an entire Order.

importance; and this is a thing that I cannot decide for you, since I do not know the circumstances nor the conduct of the subjects. Moreover, it appears to me that this is an affair that one cannot well transact by letter.

It will, therefore, be necessary that we see each other, before or after the journey to Caposele. It would even be well to take with you some other Consultors, as Father Caione, or Father Fiocchi, or Father Ferrara; and it would be still better if you all came here to Arienzo.

As for [Father] Melchionna, we should show compassion for him.

In regard to [Father Fabrizio] Cimino his place is supplied by Father Grossi; for I understood that Cimino had gone to Rocca.

As for Iliceto, what shall I say? May God provide!

I bless and embrace your Reverence and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 536.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He asks for the removal of a scandal. — Defence of the episcopal *mensa* (revenues).

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 14, 1767.

I make known to your Excellency that here at Arienzo and near the ducal palace there lives a bad woman in one of the houses of Don Camillo Lettiere. Her name is Antonia Biancolino who, as she is the prey of a hideous malady, infects the souls and bodies of poor young men, subjects of your Excellency.

Hence I have come to beg your Excellency to send an

order to your governor at Arienzo to have her imprisoned, and then to banish her far from any part of the State.

It is true that in large cities (so they say) women of ill fame are permitted so that greater evils may be avoided; but in small places this kind of women cannot be tolerated, because even one of them is sufficient to corrupt the whole place.

With the Prince of Riccia I lately succeeded in having three others of the same kind of women banished from the country under his jurisdiction. I hope to obtain the same favor from the kindness of your Excellency, and from the zeal which you have for the good of your subjects.

I also renew the petition for the decision that Signor Don Giuseppe Mazzacchera is to give in regard to the tax on the pasturage of the fief of Bagnoli; this fief belongs to my revenues.[1]

Already the space of a year and a half has elapsed since out of respect for your Excellency's family I thought it to be well to refer to one of your advocates the decision in this controversy. To tell the truth, this is not a matter of controversy, since from the time in which I examined the papers, the reason appeared to be clearly in favor of the episcopal revenues, and as I hear from my advocate the case became afterwards clearer in the process brought before the royal Chamber.

I therefore months ago repeated my petition to your Excellency, as also to Count di Cerreto to hasten this affair, but so far nothing has been done. And in the mean time the episcopal revenues are entirely deprived of the right to the *pasturage*, because the former tenant or lessee refused to renew the lease, and the present lessee has been prohibited by the agent of Sant' Agata, Don Francesco Mostillo, to exercise his office. On the other hand, I am

[1] For two years this tax had not been paid to the episcopal revenues.

greatly afflicted by scruples of conscience in regard to this matter.

If it were not for these scruples, I should perhaps not speak about this thing, not wishing to show myself importunate towards your Excellency. I sign myself

Your very devoted and obedient servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 537.

To Sister Maria Illuminata Garzillo, in the Monastery at Lauro.

He notifies her of a faculty conceded to Father Criscuoli.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 21, 1767.

I have read your letter.

It is true, that by our Rule it is forbidden to the subjects of our Congregation to direct nuns; but in a certain case a partial dispensation may be granted.

In order, therefore, to serve you in certain needs I will write to Father Criscuoli that he may continue to counsel you from time to time; and I will also write to Father Villani to give his consent to Father Criscuoli's performing this act of charity.

I beg you, however, to write him as rarely as possible; not oftener than once a month; when during any month you have no special reason to do so, and you may write less frequently.

Besides, as Father Criscuoli goes about giving missions, it will happen not rarely that you will be a long time without receiving an answer. Hence I would beg you to seek a confessor, the best that you have in your neighbor-

hood, so as to be able often to confer with him, and to send for him at once when necessary.

I say this, because the devil may gain much while the answers of Father Criscuoli are being delayed, and while you receive no aid from any other spiritual Father. Some time will, however, be needed till my letter may arrive. I believe that this coming week you may write to him, and I will also write this evening to Father Villani.

In the mean time continue to practise the things that Father Criscuoli has prescribed for you, and let his sayings be remembered, because a thing once said, is always said. Recommend me to Jesus Christ; I will do the same for you.

I beg you also to recommend yourself always to the Madonna if you wish to persevere.

I remain your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I will not send a letter to Father Villani to-day. The said Father has gone far away, I will write to him afterwards. Meanwhile Father Criscuoli according to my permission will answer you without expecting the permission of Father Villani. I have, however, thought better of it, and I send you my note to the said Father Criscuoli so that he may answer you and may continue to answer you from time to time, as I have already written.

I again beg you to write as rarely as possible; otherwise it may happen that you will lose everything.

Let a rule of life be given only once, and let it be changed only when a new circumstance should arise; then you will need new counsel. Moreover, it will not be necessary always to answer and to receive the same things, to hear every time a new sermon. Let the answer be thus arranged: Ask counsel about the new things that may occur, but do not expect to hear the same advice.

Father Criscuoli is, I think, at Nocera; yet I do not know this for certain; there it is, however, known where he is.

After an old copy.

LETTER 538.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli.[1]

He grants him a permission on certain conditions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 21, 1767.

Sister Maria Illuminata Garzillo of the monastery of Lauro has written to me, begging me to permit your Reverence to answer her and to give her from time to time some advice about her conduct in life.

She has written to me that Father Villani had refused to give permission; but I will write to Father Villani that in a

[1] Father Diodato Criscuoli was born at Scala, May 10, 1738. "The first time," so he relates in the process of beatification of the saint, "that I had the happiness of knowing the venerable servant of God and to speak to him was in the year 1753, and I perceived with my own eyes what was always said of the sanctity and of the virtues of the said servant of God. I continued to know him and to treat with him several other times, above all in the holy mission at Scala, my native place about the year 1754, and in that of Amalfi in the year 1756, where finally I resolved to enter the Congregation; this I did in the following December of the same year. From this time forward I always went about with him, spoke to him, and wrote with him under his dictation his ascetical as well as moral works, and I depose that when I associated with him I always admired in him an extraordinary sanctity. . ."

Father Criscuoli made his profession, February 9, 1758, and became an excellent missionary. He passed to a better life, July 31, 1804, when he was Master of novices and Consultor-General of the Congregation. During his whole life he was most exact in regular observance, and a true model of every religious virtue.

case of necessity a dispensation may be given as is precisely the case here; so it appears to me.

I have, however, written to the nun that this correspondence should be rare. She is satisfied with writing a letter once a month; but I have told her that, should it not be necessary, she should be satisfied with less.

You must inform her that she should not expect to have you always repeat the same things, but that she may ask advice only when new cases present themselves; otherwise you would be losing time.

Moreover, I have requested her to seek a confessor in the vicinity, because it would be difficult to be directed by a confessor who is far away and who goes on missions.

For the rest, the rule of life that she has once received from your hands should suffice for always, and she should not expect that you should each time preach a sermon to her.

I bless you and remain

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 539.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Every rule admits of exception. — Expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish States.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 21, 1767.

Sister Maria Illuminata Garzillo of the monastery of Lauro has written to me and has informed me of the great wants of her soul, adding that because she was prevented from receiving the answer of Father Criscuoli she has relapsed.

It is true that our subjects, especially those that are young, have not the permission to direct nuns; but it is not forbidden to give them advice from time to time, especially when one is far away. Besides, it is our duty to minister to souls, and with still greater reason to the soul of a nun in danger, the more so if she is far away from us. All rules, however, in cases of necessity have their exceptions; otherwise all laws would become unjust.

This nun has also written to me that she is willing that your Reverence should open her letters.

In short, considering the grave necessity in which she is according to her letter, I have before God believed it to be my duty to write to Father Criscuoli that whenever she asks for advice he may write to her provided that this happens but rarely.

I tell your Reverence this so that you may be well informed in regard to this matter.

I expect you on your return from Caposele and Iliceto in order to speak about many things. It will be especially necessary to make changes in the house at Iliceto at least for the greater part. Enough; we shall afterwards speak about these things.

You may have already heard the sad news that the Jesuits have been expelled from the kingdom of Spain.[1] Alas! so many poor Indians are now abandoned. *Justus*

[1] In April of this year 1767, King Charles III. proclaimed to all the Spanish authorities, in Europe and in the New World, the order to send to exile from his States the Society of Jesus. The sad news, as St. Alphonsus calls it, filled with amazement and grief all Catholics and especially Pope Clement XIII. who on April 16 thus wrote to the confessor of the king: "Testis nobis est Deus, accepto tali atrocissimo nuncio, nos consternato prorsus animo esse, et lacrymas opplevisse os nostrum, considerantes, summa nostri cordis anxietate, quanto in æternæ salutis periculo versetur carissimus filius [Carolus III] . . . quem . . . in charitatis gerimus sinu." (God is our witness that when we received such atrocious news our soul was thrown into consternation and our eyes were filled with

es Domine, et rectum judicium tuum! [Thou art just O Lord, and Thy judgment is right! — *Ps.* cxviii. 137.]

I bless you and remain

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 540.

To Sister Brianna Carafa,[1] Benedictine Nun in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He encourages her in her new kind of life.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 28, 1767.

Your letter found me in bed, suffering from an illness of many days. This evening I am better, but I expect a fresh attack of fever. The preceding attack that occurred the other night was so violent that I received the Viaticum and Extreme Unction. Recommend me, therefore, to Jesus Christ that he may give my soul a good passage into eternity if he has designed to call me.

I rejoice that Father Savastano [2] has come, and I rejoice

tears when reflecting with the greatest anxiety to what danger was exposed the soul of our very dear Son [Charles III.] whom we bear in the bosom of charity.)

How much our saint suffered, he himself thus expressed, July 2, in a letter to Sister Carafa: "Tell Father Savastano that I do not omit continually to pray to God for him and the Society; and I hope that the Lord may console me. I write no longer to any of his Fathers, because I do not know what to say, and I fear to heap affliction upon affliction; hence I do nothing else than adore the divine judgments and to pray."

1 In a letter to the daughter of the Prince di Ardore, dated October 31, 1766, page 178, mention is made of this chosen spouse of Jesus and of her extraordinary vocation.

2 Father Savastano, director of the Sister belonged to the Society of Jesus, which he entered in 1733, and was admitted to the solemn

more to hear that you are in peace. The inferior part will have to bear reproaches which the nuns will continue to make, especially when they see you going to the cell that has been assigned to you. But in your prayers prepare yourself to suffer everything in peace and joy for the love of Jesus Christ; and however much you may hear them say, always show a serene countenance.

Laugh then at the *little nuns*, etc., (whom *you think* you see.) Although this may be true, the devils cannot do us any evil without God's permission. Hence if God should permit the devils to annoy you in any place, receive this as a cross; but do not on account of this leave the place of solitude to which you have now been assigned through your Superiors. Perhaps the Lord has wished the foregoing things in order to make you reach the kind of solitude that exists in the monastery of S. Marcellino.

I have said, *although this may be true;* but I believe it is not true. They are words invented through spite at seeing you established in this state of solitude without grates, without a parlor and without any other encumbrance. Hence you should laugh at them, because you will never hear nor see anything. And then *he that loves Jesus Christ has nothing to fear, and in order to please Jesus Christ suffers everything cheerfully.*

Whenever you can easily write to Father Pisanelli [1] tell him to have me recommended to Jesus Christ by the Sisters of the Hermitage [2] on account of the state in which I am, and for a good passage into eternity if it pleases God. Do this charity for me.

After an old copy.

profession February 2, 1752. A religious of great ability and extraordinary virtue; he was an indefatigable laborer and a very great friend of our saint whose countryman he was.

[1] Father Pisanelli was also a member of the Society of Jesus.

[2] Very likely the Hermits of Mother Orsola Benincasa, among whom Sister Brianna Carafa wished to enter.

LETTER 541.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He informs him of the state of his health.

Live Jesus and Mary!

ARIENZO, May 9, 1767.

I answer you briefly sitting at my table. I am well now, although I am taking remedies.

I expect you on the 20th, and I will notify [the Consultors] Fathers Ferrara, Fiocchi, and Liguori.

Everything else *bene provisum* [has been well provided for].

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 542.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He encourages her to lead a solitary life.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 26, 1767.

I answer your last letter.

As for the singular life that you are leading, if you acted thus out of your own head it would certainly not be well; but as you do it out of obedience to your confessor and to the archbishop, you would do wrong not to continue in order to avoid appearing singular.

D. Girolama Sanfelice, as is related at the end of the Life of Father Torres, also gave herself up to this singular life; and because she did so in obedience to her Superiors, she sanctified herself.

Continue, therefore, with confidence, and prepare yourself to suffer in this kind of life tediousness, scruples, and frightful desolation. I am not a prophet, but I foresee that it will be so, because God wishes that you should become really a saint, and that one does not arrive at *great sanctity without suffering great crosses.*

For pity's sake do not be afraid of ghosts; calm yourself by pronouncing the names of *Jesus and Mary*, and do not mind them.

It is certain that in this monastery of S. Marcellino you will have a much more solitary life than in the desert itself. Now Jesus Christ wishes that you should be a true solitary. Imagine, therefore, that God has destined you to live in a grotto, like St. Paul the Hermit, enjoying the company of no one on this earth, *except God alone, and nothing more.*

Obey with exactness your confessor by practising the mortifications that he has imposed upon you. When we obey we do everything, because we then do the will of God.

The service that I expect from you is to continue to recommend me to Jesus Christ. This I do for you every day.

Thank God! I feel much better — so much so as to be able to preach in all the places where I stay for the visitation of the diocese that I have begun.

Care very little about the raillery and vituperation of which you are the object. These are to us roses and flowers when God makes us feel his presence. But this is hard to bear when it seems that God separates himself from us and abandons us. In the latter case it is necessary that we sustain ourselves by *humility* in esteeming ourselves deserving of being thus treated; by *resignation* in embracing this state of abasement, because such is the good pleasure of God; and by *prayer* in asking God with fervor

not to console us by sweetness, but to pity us, assist us, and not to abandon us.

I wish you to buy at the bookseller's at S. Biagio the book of the "Novena of Christmas," in which you will find not only this novena, but many meditations on the love for Jesus Christ and on the Heart of Jesus, as well as other things suitable to nourish piety.

This book has been re-printed by the booksellers and it costs, I believe two *carlini*.[1]

What I desire most that you should read in this book are the affections and the prayers that conclude the Discourses and the Meditations, as also the acts that are found towards the end, where mention is made of the preparation and thanksgiving of priests in regard to Mass. I use this book every day, and I hope that you will find in it abundant nourishment for your soul.

I trust that the Holy Spirit may keep us always in the flames of his divine love.

I ask you to pray also for the Church which sees herself attacked on all sides; do this every day. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Believe me, dear Sister,

Your humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

[1] 0.85 fr.

LETTER 543.

To Don Francesco Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

He asks a favor for a prisoner.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 31, 1767.

Dear Sir: I have heard that the son of Tollo Jadavaia, my tenant, has been imprisoned for carrying prohibited arms.

As he is needed by his poor father to assist him in taking care of the farm, I beg you to do me the favor to take it upon yourself to have him released. I have made the same request of Signor Domenico Cervo who I hear is the commissary of the tribunal.

Confiding in your favors, and offering to you my services, I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 544.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He rejoices to know that he is better. — Various affairs.

[June 1767?]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I have been consoled to read with my own eyes that you are better and that you have gone to Nocera. Blessed be God always, always!

I hear of a new accusation brought by our friend [1] against our Fathers at Iliceto. Let us ask the Lord to make him a saint, and let us trust in the mercy of God, because he will help us.

I bless your Reverence and all your subjects.

[1] Francesco Antonio Maffei, one of the adversaries of the Congregation.

That blessed tertian fever is accustomed to come again. If it returns try to procure and use at once Peruvian bark.

The Rector of S. Angelo [a Cupolo] has sent Niccolò Rocca, who says that he has served the Congregation for six years; he would therefore wish to receive the habit. I recommend him to your Reverence.

The Rector, however, has not written to me anything about this, he speaks only about the affair of Fr. Romoaldo; but this young man he has himself recommended.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 545.

To the Same.

Instructions to be sent to the new Rectors of the houses of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

AIROLA, June 20, 1767.

I have sent the five circular letters for the houses of the kingdom and one for the house in Sicily, in which I have written the appointments of the Rectors with other instructions that I wish to have observed.

It is necessary at the same time to remind the new Rectors of several things.

In the first place they should not undertake to construct anything new without the approbation of the Consultors of the house. This is understood of buildings of little moment. If there is question of erecting any building of importance, the permission of my Consultors and my permission must be obtained.

Secondly, let them not buy any books of great value; it would be better for them to think of giving the subjects good food, so that they may have no reason to complain and may be more willing to submit to the Rule.

They should, moreover, exercise gentleness towards all, should correct with charity and in private; even when the faults have been committed in public, the correction should first be made in private. *Mildness and firmness* should be shown towards all; let there be no partiality to any one; when a thing is granted to one, it can with difficulty be refused to another; and this is the ruin of regular observance.

Communicate this, either orally or in writing, as having come from me.

As for for the Rector at Sicily, I believe that you will appoint Father Blasucci.

At the beginning of next week I shall be at Sant' Agata.

I have read the letter of the Pope that was written to the Catholic king.[1] It is most beautiful and tender. I will have it copied and sent to you; but at present I cannot have it copied.

I bless your Reverence and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The King of Spain, Charles III. had written to Pope Clement XIII. March 31, 1767 and announced to him the expulsion of the Jesuits from every part of Spain and their arrival in the Pontifical States. Clement XIII. answered him by a Brief, dated April 16, 1767. It is to this Brief that St. Alphonsus no doubt refers. We may read the admirable letter of the Sovereign Pontiff in the work of Rev. Father Ravignan: "Clement XIII. and Clement XIV." tom. i. p. 104.

LETTER 546.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He exhorts them to the practice of religious virtues and of perfect observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, June 20, 1767.

My very dear Brethren in Jesus Christ: I inform you that the Rectors chosen for the next three years are: Father Mazzini at Nocera, Father Gaiano at Ciorani, Father Caione at Caposele, Father Liguori at Iliceto, and Father de Paola at Sant' Angela. There are four Consultors among them; it was thought to be necessary to choose them under present circumstances.

My Brethren, let us keep ourselves united to Jesus Christ; for at the present time we are in great danger in the midst of the persecutions that we have to suffer. It is only the hand of the Lord that can aid us to come forth from this trial without injury to the Congregation. If, however, we do not conduct ourselves well, Jesus Christ will abandon us.

I therefore recommend to you to attach yourselves to Jesus crucified, and to converse as little as possible with persons that do not belong to the Congregation; otherwise we shall lose the spirit of our state.

I also recommend to you to flee more and more from the houses of your relatives. You have seen the example of so many subjects who by visiting the parental hearth have lost their vocation, and God knows what will become of them!

In general, I recommend to you the love of poverty and of humility, — virtues, which, I am sorry to hear, have decreased in the Congregation.

Let us be careful; for at the present time we are in danger of being sent back to our families; this would be the greatest chastisement that we could receive from God.

I bless you and embrace you all in the Heart of Jesus Christ.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original in possession of his Eminence Cardinal Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples and in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 547.

To Father Mazzini, Rector at Pagani.

Rules which the subjects should observe.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

AIROLA, June 25, [1767].

I beg you to communicate in my name to the Community of S. Michele the following regulations:

First, no Father, no Brother, no stranger, should go to the kitchen with the exception of those that have work to perform there.

Secondly, all must be present at the common acts, except those that are really ill, and those that have your express permission to absent themselves.

Thirdly, the Fathers should not hear confessions in convents more than once a month, and no one should receive new penitents.

Fourthly, with the exception of Thursdays, let no one go out to take a walk; especially should no one go out on great festivals.

Fifthly, the Fathers and the Brothers should not hold long conversations with strangers, ecclesiastics or seculars, whether at the door or in the garden, and much less in

their rooms, without your express permission and without a good reason.

So also without the permission of the Rector it is forbidden to the Fathers, Brothers, and also to strangers, to go to the room of Brother Mattia, where he keeps his clocks.

I embrace and bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 548.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He announces to him his departure for Naples.

[End of June 1767.]

. . . About the 12th of next month I shall be at Naples to transact some business that concerns us.

Make a novena for this intention and have prayers said. My stay will be a long one.[1]

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xxxix.

1 The saint departed for Naples about the 16th of July, and remained there two months and three days. Why he went there he thus explained in a letter of August 18 to his printer Remondini at Venice: "Thank God I am now in better health, and at present I am at Naples on account of a certain tempest raised against my Congregation by malevolent men." — The head of these malevolent individuals was Baron Nicola Sarnelli, and the accusations brought against the Congregation are expressed in the long defence which the saint wrote on this occasion to the King of Naples, Ferdinand IV. and which may be read further on. (Letter 554 page 230.)

LETTER 549.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He refers to a certain lawsuit, and for his guidance returns a letter.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, June 29, 1767.

I have received your last letter in which you inform me that the harvest is lost. May God preserve us! However I hope it will not be so as the trial is soon to take place.

I secretly send you this muddled letter written by a lay-brother. I do not believe what he says. It appears however that you know already what the trouble is. Enough; read it in secret and keep it a secret that I have sent it to you to read.

I bless your Reverence and all.

BROTHER ALFONSO
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 550.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

New encouragement and counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 2, 1767.

I have received your letter, and all that I have read in it consoles me.

I am glad to hear that you do everything without relish, and with great dislike for solitude. Oh, how much more beautiful appears to me the solitude that God has given to you than the solitude [of Sister Orsola Benincasa]! There

you would certainly have in the morning and in the evening, after dinner and after supper, your recreations and other relaxations; these you have not now, nor will you ever have them. Hence the monastery is for you a true desert, and even better than a desert; for in the desert you would always be alone, whilst there where you are, there are some that blame you, turn you into ridicule, or at least regard you with contempt.

Moreover, I am pleased to hear that you now experience true poverty. Oh, how much assistance does not God give you in order to sanctify you!

I read that during your exercises you have had a day of spiritual consolation; but you know that God sends these alleviations in order to sustain us in our weakness. When you enjoy them, thank the Lord, but do not seek them. A few days ago I read in the Life of the Blessed [Saint] Jane Frances de Chantal that she suffered for forty-one years horrible desolation, and was full of temptations.

Finally, I am consoled to know that everything in your present life causes you pain. Oh, how beautiful it is to love God in the midst of continual pains and without sensible consolations! I beg the Lord to grant you perseverance.

As for Mgr. [Matteo] Testa I beg you to apply again to him to come to see you about an affair of conscience.

I will not now write to him for a certain reason; but if after repeated efforts on your part he does not come, send me word, and I will then write to him as you have requested me to do.

I thank God for the condition I am now in, though the tertian fever attacks me occasionally.

Tell Father Savastano that I do not cease to pray to God for him and for the Society, and that I hope the Lord will console me. I no longer write to any of these Fathers,

because I know not what to say; I fear to increase the sorrow of the sorrowful. I confine myself to the adoration of the judgment of God, and to prayer.

As for you, be happy; for it seems to me that God has disposed all things for your own good.

Proceed with confidence, and continue to do what you are doing without any useless disquietude. Overcome scruples, as your director has already directed you to do, without paying any attention to them; walk honestly before God, always abandoning yourself to the arms of his mercy. When your soul is filled with greater aridity, sustain yourself by occasionally reading, again taking up the books in which you find most nourishment; and frequently occupy yourself with asking God *for his love, for perseverance, and for perfect conformity.*

Do not cease to recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I trust you do already.

May the divine Spirit fill your heart with his holy love.

Believe me, dear Sister,

Your humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 551.

To Father Caione, Rector at Caposele.

Rules of prudence to be observed. — Kindness that should be shown.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 6, 1767.

I have received an anonymous letter against the Fathers of Caposele written by some priest who is otherwise favorably inclined to the Congregation.

For pity's sake exhort all those that preach and hear confessions to speak with prudence and to speak well of every one.

It is also said in this letter that if a stop is not put to these things, recourse will be had to the members of the king's household. Try, therefore, for the love of God, to avoid new troubles; we have enough on our heads at present. Any accusation of this kind at this moment would greatly injure us.

I also entreat you to govern with all possible kindness. To this mildness, however, should always be united the firmness necessary not to tolerate faults that do us more harm than all persecutions; but when you have to correct others, do so always privately with the greatest charity, and treat every one with affability and politeness; I recommend this to you most earnestly.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 552.

To Father Andrea Villani.

News of his health. — Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 7, 1767.

I did not set out [for Naples], but I have written in a very efficacious manner to the President.[1] If he does not favor us after receiving my letter, a hundred visits of mine to Naples would not render him favorable.

[1] The President of the Council, Marquis Baldassare Cito.

I suspect that the tertian fever will attack me every moment; and the doctors say that at every new cold and unusual movement it may return, and if it returns in summer, I should not be rid of it the whole winter. Especially did I suffer last night from my chest, because at Airola the asthma also returned.

As for Father Verdesca,[1] he should by all means go to Ciorani under pretext of taking the baths; thence he need not be sent back to Caposele; because afterwards we shall think of what is to be done when things have become more quiet. Father Cimino will tell you more about this affair.

I have received the letter from S. Angiolo, but I wish to know if there is anything else in regard to the conduct of this Father.

I also recommend to your Reverence not to let the young men hear confessions, before they are thirty years old, as is said in the Constitutions; regard should also be had for those that have passed that age, and whom you would not think it expedient to allow to hear confessions.

Moreover, I ask you not to allow our young men to go out on missions before they have given proof of their spirit and of their prudent conduct.

I have told Father Giovenale that I grant a dispensation from the vows to Father Maffei,[2] and I say the same to your Reverence.

In regard to our affairs at Naples, it appears to me that we need not be so much afraid, because in the end we may

[1] Father Angelo Verdesca was dismissed that same year from the Congregation.

[2] Father Giuseppe Maffei, having been dismissed from the Congregation and having been in the world for some time, was received among the Fathers of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul, and was sent to Goa.

not be found guilty of evident transgressions. And then there is a God; hence prayers are needed.

As for my journey to Naples I will see what will be done on Friday, and if necessary I will depart. I should wish first to know what are the accusations so that they will guide me in what I am to say to the President.

I have had to keep Father Cimino here as I was expecting a decision from Naples.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 553.

To the Same.

Prudence of the saint in a difficult case.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NAPLES, [July] 18, [1767].

It never came to my mind that you had the other day acted with duplicity towards me, nor that you feared an adverse opinion from me. But what has displeased me is that singular things of importance have been done without a word having been told to me. And now I hear that the same thing has been done many times. But what is done, is done; in future it will be necessary to proceed with greater caution.

In regard to the subject who is at Ciorani,[1] Father Fiocchi says (and I am of the same opinion) that under present circumstances the least noise in this matter would cause great harm. Now it appears that it is not expedient for me to write to him because my letter would already seem to be a half dismissal. It will be better to make him

[1] Probably Father Angelo Verdesca.

hear through Father [Michele] de Michele, or through another, how urgently his father wishes his return. Thus we may expect that he himself will seek a dispensation, or see that he will express his mind and we can then be guided accordingly.

I am pleased to hear news about Father Apice. Let us leave all to God, and let us not omit prayer; because all my confidence rests in God.

I bless you, and also bless all.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Thanks be to God, under the circumstances with which you are acquainted the affair has not kindled into a flame; and this has much consoled me.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 554.

To Ferdinand IV. King of Naples.

He exposes to him the state of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the end that it pursues, and defends it against the selfish accusations of Baron Sarnelli.

[Naples, end of July 1767.]

Sire, your Majesty knows the numerous complaints which the Baron of Ciorani, Don Nicola Sarnelli, has made against our humble Congregation or Association of Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. His whole aim is to secure the ownership of a vineyard, which is situated at Ciorani and which furnishes the missionaries of this house with a part of the subsidy assigned to them by his Majesty the Catholic king, your august father. As a member and director of this Association, I am obliged to defend it, and I must first expose to your Majesty the end that it pursues, the state in which it now is.

Our end is to evangelize the hamlets in the country which are most abandoned in a spiritual point of view. We do so by means of missions, catechetical instructions, and other pious exercises; but it is above all by administering the sacrament of penance that we come to the assistance of these poor people. We thus withdraw many souls from the abyss of sacrilegious confessions: these (all missionaries know the fact) are frequent in small places, for the few confessors who are there are all natives, and for this reason the faithful are afraid to confess to them.

We have exercised this ministry for thirty-four years, that is, since 1732, which year saw the birth of our Congregation; and with the help of God we have usually given forty or fifty missions every year. The fact is, during eight or nine months of the year we leave our houses to travel through the hamlets and over the mountains; we penetrate as far as the huts of the shepherds, and thus assist these poor country people who have no confessors, no preachers, no one to teach them the Christian doctrine; many of them are even ignorant of the principal mysteries of the faith. To these labors must be added numerous retreats which we give every year, either in our houses to ecclesiastics and to seculars, or in the seminaries, or finally to the soldiers of your Majesty, and in the prisons of the State.

The Sovereign Pontiff, having been informed of all this, wished, in 1748, that a work so useful to the poor people in the country should be established permanently. He, therefore, approved our Congregation under the title of the Congregation of the *Most Holy Redeemer;* he also approved the Rules, and granted us many privileges, all spiritual, with a view to the salvation of souls.

His Majesty, the Catholic king, was informed of this Pontifical concession, and in the year 1752, he regulated by an ordinance the mode of subsistence of the subjects in our Association. The following are the terms in which the

royal decree was conceived: "The king has perfect knowledge of the good that is done for the poor country people in the kingdom by the holy and exemplary missions preached under the direction of the priest, Don Alfonso de Liguori. He, therefore, has not permitted the destruction of a work so glorious for God, so useful to the people. The piety that characterizes him has even induced him to do more, and in order that this work might be maintained in its first fervor he drew up a general rule."

The rule was as follows: "By order of his Majesty all donations, inheritances, and legacies of real estate and annual income that will be made in favor of the missionaries directed by Don Alfonso and living in common, shall be null and void if they are made, not in favor of any one of them in particular, but of all of them as living in Community; for these priests are legally incapable of acquiring in common this kind of property. With this condition, and with this condition only, the king permits these missionaries to live together in the four houses of Ciorani, Caposele, Iliceto, and Nocera, and in these four houses only, provided they live there as secular priests, always subordinate to the respective Ordinaries; for his Majesty does not recognize these houses as convents or Communities."

In regard to the property already acquired by the before-mentioned houses, the decree thus states: "But in order that these missionaries may provide for their subsistence and maintain the work of their missions, a work to which they have hitherto applied themselves with an indefatigable zeal, and by which the people of the many provinces of the kingdom have profited so much;—as they have moreover the laudable custom of not taking up collections during these missions, his Majesty ordains the following points: 1. It is permitted to all these priests to keep their personal and patrimonial property; 2. The

goods enumerated hereafter, which these missionaries have hitherto acquired shall be left to them; but the administration thereof shall be intrusted to the bishops of the dioceses in which this property is situated; and this in accord with the governor and syndic of the place. From this property the bishops are to deduct two *carlini* [1] a day for each of the priests and their servants; the surplus shall be distributed among the poor of the place."

Then follows an enumeration of the goods which the bishops should administer. The house at Ciorani is thus mentioned: "For the house at Ciorani, diocese of Salerno, 500 ducats [2] given at first to Don Alfonso de Liguori by the priest, Don Andrea Sarnelli, to be used for certain pious works according to the intention of the donor, and afterwards given by the same Don Alfonso to the priests, his companions, living in the house at Ciorani." (To this house 500 ducats are assigned; but as I shall show further on, the vineyard, all expenses deducted, does not even yield 200.)[3] Then comes the income of the house at Caposele, which is to be 450 ducats;[4] that of the house at Iliceto, 350.[5] Finally, the house at Nocera is not mentioned as having any income; in fact, it owns only a simple dwelling-house for the Fathers with a garden for which eight ducats [6] are paid by a convent of nuns of S. Chiara.

The four houses together have, therefore, not more than 1310 ducats [7] of revenue. They have also to provide for several daily Masses and are charged with other obligations, so that a deduction being made of the Masses and other dues, the income of the four houses together does not reach 600 ducats.[8]

On the other hand, the missionaries, my companions,

[1] 0.85 fr.
[2] 2125 frs.
[3] 850 frs.
[4] 1912.50 frs.
[5] 1487.50 frs.
[6] 34 frs.
[7] 5567.50 frs.
[8] 2550 frs.

who live in the four above-mentioned houses with the serving Brothers (to whom his Catholic Majesty has also assigned a *tarì*[1] a day), number about eighty. This number is necessary in order that they may be able to preach and occupy themselves at the same time with the care of the places where they live. Hence the result is that each of them draws only a few *grana*[2] a day of said revenues (when the payment of the latter is asked, for it is not always asked).

But it will be asked, *How have you been able with so moderate a revenue to maintain so many subjects and to preach every year so many missions?*—I answer: it is the effect of the edification that the missionaries have given to the public; for it has induced pious persons to make these offerings and to maintain a work so useful, not to say, so necessary to the country people. Otherwise without this assistance, how could we have lived?

My companions have, therefore, hitherto enjoyed a good reputation in the whole kingdom and beyond its limits. This reputation apostolic laborers should necessarily possess in order to afford spiritual profit to souls; for if one could say of them that they labor with selfish ends, all their labors would be useless, all their sacrifices would be lost. Now it is precisely this good reputation that Baron Sarnelli has tried to blacken with your Majesty and with the public. In a memorial, which has even been printed, he has described us in horrible colors, in order to render us odious to your Majesty and to every one. He has represented us as proud, as shameless traffickers, carrying on commerce and monopolizing the crops; finally, as men desirous of dominating and oppressing others, infractors of the royal ordinances, bent upon gaining, not souls, but

[1] 0.85 fr.

[2] The *grano* is little less than 0.05 fr.

temporal goods, to enrich ourselves, and to live, as the saying is, more at our ease.

We possess no riches, we have no patronage; we have only one thing, a good reputation of which I have spoken. This reputation once lost, all is lost. I, therefore, see myself obliged to refute the accusations brought against us by Baron Sarnelli; for I am the director of this poor Association which certain persons persecuted through interested motives, and which they would even wish to see destroyed. This is the reason, Sire, why I take the liberty of representing to you, in the second place, the truth of the facts; for with the latter I have already become familiar. Your Majesty will see them in their true colors, and will perfectly appreciate the value of the complaints made against us by the baron.

According to the statement of the baron the foundation of our house at Ciorani took place in the following manner: "Two of my companions and myself *seduced by the flattering prospect of being founders looked with an envious eye at the vineyard* which was owned at Ciorani by Don Andrea Sarnelli, brother of the baron,—a vineyard which had been given to him by his father as his portion and for his subsistence; and we adroitly influenced Don Andrea to make us a present of it." This, however, is not true. Don Andrea, desiring to see established at Ciorani one of our houses, had us called to evangelize the place, and at the same time to give missions in the vast diocese of Salerno which is filled with very many hamlets. This is the reason why he offered us the revenues of his vineyard as a means of subsistence. For this end he offered me at first, in 1735, a certain donation derived from his vineyard; then on June 4, 1752, he made to me and my successors (but to me as a private person, not as a member of the Congregation) another donation irrevocable *during lifetime*, stipulated by Carlo Pepe, notary at Nocera, by

which he gave me five hundred ducats annually of the revenues of the vineyard. The deed also contained the following clause: "Should Don Andrea die intestate without having disposed of the rest of the vineyard and of the the revenues which it annually produces, a deduction having been made from the before-mentioned annual five hundred ducats, and from the principal given to Don Alfonso, the vineyard, after the death of Don Andrea, shall remain entirely free from every burden for the benefit of Don Alfonso and of his heirs and successors, with the obligation of fulfilling with the revenues of the rest of the vineyard certain obligations which have been orally intimated to him by Don Andrea who is thus acting with full knowledge of the case, for reasons well known to him and through motives of conscience."

The deed adds: "By virtue of the present instrument of the donation, the aforesaid Don Alfonso and his heirs and successors can with all justice exact, annually after the death of Don Andrea, the before-mentioned five hundred ducats and even the entire vineyard from any person, whoever he may be, who may have taken possession of it; and they may make of the sums indicated any use they may think fit, etc."

But here one thing is to be remarked: it is that the minor part of the vineyard, but of the vineyard as it is at present, was given to Don Andrea by the baron, his father, for his portion (it contained thirty-one arpents, and as it was sterile land, it was of little value, and was appraised at two thousand ducats); but the major part was afterwards acquired by Don Andrea himself who bought other adjoining lands.

To conform with the intentions of our benefactor I afterwards gave to those of my companions who lived at Ciorani the five hundred ducats derived from the vineyard, and as has been said above, his Catholic Majesty ordained

that of these five hundred ducats a *tarì*[1] a day should be taken for the maintenance of each one.

On December 26, Don Andrea drew up another deed in which he inserted a copy of the royal ordinance. By this act, stipulated by Carlo Pepe, a notary at Nocera, he gave irrevocably *during life* to the Archbishop of Salerno, Mgr. Casimiro Rossi, and to all his successors *pro tempore* [for the time being], the entire vineyard on condition that he should distribute the revenues to the priests of our Association living at Ciorani. Don Andrea reserved to himself only three hundred ducats annually during his life, and two other annuities after his death. On the 30th of the same month of December a public act put the archbishop in possession of the vineyard by means of the parish priest, Don Tarquinio Milone, his procurator, who had been deputed for this purpose.

I now come to the objections and accusations brought forward against us by Baron Sarnelli. He says that, in order to elude the prescriptions of the royal ordinance and the prohibition of acquiring an annual income, we *fraudulently* made a bargain with the Archbishop of Salerno that he should give us the annual income of the vineyard; and since that time we have taken possession of the vineyard as absolute masters, paying even the ordinary contributions, without the least interference on the part of the archbishop, except when he signs a warrant in our favor.

We shall now answer the first assertion, and afterwards examine the second.

It is not true that we made a bargain with the archbishop that he should give us the revenues of the vineyard. It was the donor himself who spontaneously and freely wished to make this bargain with the prelate, the better to secure the stability of our house at Ciorani. Now this donation was not contrary to the wish of his Catholic Majesty; on

[1] 0.85 fr.

the contrary, it was in conformity with his wish, since his Majesty desired that the archbishop should furnish to every subject, as derived from the revenues of the vineyard, the subsidy of a *tarì* a day, up to the sum of five hundred ducats annually. Consequently, if these revenues do not exceed five hundred ducats (and in the house at Ciorani there are so many subjects that with a *tarì* for each, the revenues are entirely absorbed) we do not see why the above-mentioned donation could have been called invalid as having eluded the royal ordinances.

But, says the baron, *the vineyard yields an income much larger than five hundred ducats.*—I declare, on the contrary, that having lately wished to know what is in reality the actual revenue of the great vineyard or farm at Ciorani, I have ascertained by figures that, a deduction being made of the expenses of one hundred and fifty-six ducats and a half, this revenue does not amount at present (who could believe it on hearing the baron talking so loudly about this great vineyard?) does not, I say, amount to the sum of two hundred ducats. I say *at present* when the procurator of the archbishop has intrusted the vineyard to farmers who cultivate it at their expense, except to divide afterwards the half of the revenue; for when the procurator cultivated it at his own expense, that is, with the money derived from the vineyard itself, it did not yield more than a hundred ducats, as the account-books show. I am, therefore, almost ashamed to trouble your Majesty with this controversy, which amounts really to nothing, since the apples growing in the vineyard, which form its principal revenue, do not ripen every year, but every alternate year; and some times for two years in succession the apple-trees produce nothing.

All that I have just exposed to you is evident from the papers and accounts furnished to the archbishop by the procurator. It is true the hope is entertained that the vineyard will yield a little more in future on account of the

chestnut and mulberry-trees which bear more fruit; but this increase of revenue might amount at the most to forty or fifty ducats. Two hundred and fifty ducats at the highest is, therefore, what may be hoped for as the income of the vineyard. But let us admit that it will reach three hundred, and even three hundred and fifty ducats, when shall we be able to reach the sum of five hundred ducats?

I add another very important consideration which reduces to nothing every pretension of the baron. It is that in the year 1755, the donor Don Andrea Sarnelli having died, the baron, as the heir of his brother, laid certain claims to the vineyard; then he concluded a bargain with the Archbishop of Salerno, and by a public act, stipulated December 7, 1755, by the notary Nicola Letizia of Naples, he ratified the donation which his brother Don Andrea had made to the archbishop, and abandoned all his pretensions on condition that he would be paid a thousand ducats of which we have already given him eight hundred.

Now, how can he regard as nothing the act of renunciation which he has stipulated, and pretend that the donation made to the archbishop is invalid?

I know what the baron will reply to this. "The transaction," he will say, "is null, since by virtue of the royal ordinance your companions are incapable of acquiring in common the least annual income, and all that you can demand is that the transaction be reduced to the terms of strict justice [*ad jus et justitiam*], and that we examine whether the missionary Fathers are obliged or not to make compensations."

The transaction, according to the baron, is, therefore, null for the reason that our subjects cannot acquire in common any annual revenue. But he makes a mistake; for the transaction did not consist in that we might acquire the revenues of the vineyard—revenues which we cannot possess in common,—but it consisted in this, that the baron

formally renounced his claims to the vineyard, and consequently, he cannot any longer prevent us from receiving the subsidy assigned to us by his Majesty, the Catholic king. If in fact the baron had not by this notarial act renounced his claims, the Archbishop of Salerno, the administrator of the vineyard, would not have been able to furnish us with the subsidy in question; and if we have already paid the baron eight hundred ducats, extorted from our wretched resources, it was assuredly in order that he might not hinder us from receiving this subsidy.

In regard to the charge imputed to us that we had possessed and administered the vineyard as absolute masters, without any interference on the part of the archbishop, the following is my answer: The archbishop could certainly not come from Salerno to Ciorani to take charge of the vineyard. All that he could do was to intrust the care of it to a procurator to have it cultivated, to pay the land-tax and other charges, and to furnish us from the remainder of the revenues the subsidy that has been assigned to us by order of the king.—All this has been done, as is proved by the accounts delivered by the farmers to Don Tarquinio Milone, the procurator of the archbishop, by the statements rendered by the latter to the prelate, and by the acknowledgment of the syndic and governor of the place, as is required by the ordinance.

Now, how will the baron prove that this is not true, and that we have possessed and administered the vineyard as absolute masters, without the interposition of the archbishop? Perhaps he will endeavor to establish this fact by bringing forward as witnesses those who saw our lay-brothers watching over the laborers and engaged in cultivating the vineyard. We do not deny the fact; but, surely, we did not believe that in doing this we were transgressing the royal ordinances; for as the above-mentioned procurator is the parish priest of the place, the

occupations of his ministry prevent him from engaging in working in the vineyard, and it is he that desired our Brothers to lend their assistance. Far from regarding this interference as forbidden, we believed it necessary; as otherwise, for want of proper cultivation, the vineyard would have yielded but little, or nothing at all, and even the wretched subsidy that it has hitherto furnished, would have failed us. Moreover, our Brothers are not working in the vineyard at present; for during the past three years the procurator has leased it to farmers, and the latter have cultivated it, and cultivated it at their own expense by means of laborers whom they engage and pay for their work, and afterwards divide the revenues.

The baron also says that the Fathers have made several purchases in the district of Ciorani; particularly that they have bought certain feudal properties subject to a quarter tax,—a tax which they have not paid.

The answer to this is that these properties are merely small pieces of land. It was a gentleman of Cava, named Don Paolo de Marinis who bought them, and our Fathers at Ciorani leased them from him at thirteen ducats a year, as appears from the bill of sale and rent charges. As for the quarter tax, the baron may complain that we have not paid him; but this does not concern us; if it concerns him, let him receive payment from the purchaser.

He also says, that in accordance with the ordinance the priests, my companions, cannot live as if they formed a college or a Community; but now they have Rules and Superiors.

To this we answer as follows: The ordinance simply says that his Majesty does not look upon our houses as convents and Communities; but it does not forbid our missionaries to have Rules and Superiors as seminaries and all other associations, and even asylums destined for homeless people have them. Has not his Catholic Majesty per-

mitted the priests, living in common and united under the direction of the priest, Don Alfonso de Liguori, to live together in the four houses of Ciorani, Caposele, Iliceto, and Nocera? He has consequently permitted them to live under certain Rules and under the direction of Superiors; for without Rules and without Superiors, every one being left free to follow his caprices, how could they live in peace and maintain the work of the missions? Such a life would be a continual source of troubles and disputes; for every one would do what he pleases.

He, moreover, accuses us of having said that we are subject, not to the bishops, but only to the Pope. We answer that even our Rule, which has been approved by the Pope, obliges us to be subordinate in everything to the Ordinaries of the places.

He also says that the alms gathered in the kingdom have served to found a new house at Benevento, and that we have there secured a dwelling-place and revenues. Your Majesty may easily find out through your ministers what great riches we possess at Benevento. You will see that we live in the greatest poverty, which allows us scarcely enough to live, and obliges us, there as well as here, to live on alms. The presents given by certain pious persons have, it is true, permitted us to build a house; but a great part of these funds came from Mgr. Pacca, formerly Archbishop of Benevento, who gave us above three thousand ducats. As for the priests who live in this house, they give many more missions in your Majesty's kingdom than in the State of Benevento where the hamlets are not very numerous.

We had protested, he again says, *that we would abstain from collecting; now, we are doing nothing else but collecting.*

I answer: This question of collecting is settled by the royal ordinance, which reads thus: "As they have the praise-

worthy custom of not collecting during the missions, etc." It is therefore only during the missions that it is forbidden us to collect; outside of this time it is permitted us to do so.

I should like to know from the baron how my poor companions are to live? His Majesty, the Catholic king, has wished that for the benefit of his subjects the work of the missions should be established on a firm footing; but he has forbidden us to have annual revenues. The baron now wishes that it should also be forbidden to us to collect. How then, I ask, is the work to be sustained?

It is, therefore, by no means true, as he says, that we are seeking to enrich ourselves and to become very rich.

It is just we who, in asking for the approbation of the Holy See, have begged the Pope to limit the income of each house, in order that the houses might not have more than is necessary to live poorly according to the Rule of our Institute and to provide for the giving of missions. Why have we done so? Because we know too great an income causes the loss of fervor and ruins regular observance. And so the Pope put limits to our income.

The baron also says that we acted against the will of his father, Don Angelo Sarnelli. The latter, namely, had arranged that the revenues of certain lands incorporated with the vineyard should be used for pious works in favor of the poor. *Now*, he says, *we do not care about giving them any assistance.*

I answer that, if any one has failed in this point, it would be the procurator, and not we. But the procurator himself is not in fault, for the accounts that he has furnished prove that these pious works have been well cared for. Moreover, every one knows that our house at Ciorani continually distributes alms to the poor of the place. Living on alms, it is also necessary that we should give alms.

He also says that we trade in wines and other commodi-

ties; that we go so far as to obtain a monopoly of things, since we buy the products of other farmers in order to be the only vendors of them.

Indeed, my companions have plenty of money for the purpose of engaging in trade and in monopolies! What kind of business in wine have they transacted? They have bought several casks of wine some of which were sent to the house at Nocera, some to the house at Ciorani; and what has been sold came from the same vineyard, having been given on account of the subsidy of a *tarì* assigned to each subject.

What is, however, true, and every one knows it, my brethren at Ciorani are full of debts; and if their poverty were not relieved by the alms of some benefactors, two priests and two lay-brothers would not have enough whereon to live with the revenues of this property represented to be so vast. This I have proved by giving your Majesty an account of the revenues.

Finally, the baron says that after having received from the baroness (whom according to his opinion we have also robbed) so many benefits, we have been so ungrateful as to give counsel contrary to his interests, and we have gone so far as to speak against him even from the pulpit.

He says that we direct a Congregation of men in order to keep these attached to us and in order to control the syndic. We have boasted, he says, of being able to crush him, and we were keeping six thousand ducats in reserve to make war upon him. He has also spread various other rumors to which I do not wish to reply, and no one, I am sure, will believe them. The truth is that all these acts of ingratitude of which he speaks, originate either in the malevolent reports of some persons who say what is not true, or from his personal feelings towards us that make him believe many things for which there is no foundation. My

companions and I have, however, had every regard for him; and if at times we have been betrayed into some fault, it has occurred through inadvertence rather than bad will; but God does not punish faults of inadvertence.

I should wish, finally, that the baron would answer one question: Suppose that the house at Ciorani would have to be suppressed by the annulment of the act of donation performed by his brother to the archbishop, and of the act by which he himself, abandoning all claims to the vineyard, has ratified this donation, how can he maintain that the vineyard should be restored to him, as the heir of his brother? For if the house at Ciorani is once given up and the donation made to the archbishop is declared null, the vineyard justly reverts to me and to my successors by virtue of the first donation made to me by the priest Don Andrea. I have above quoted the act by which the latter arranged that, without any other disposition on his part, the vineyard should absolutely become my property, on condition that I should fulfill certain pious works according to the intention which he orally [*ad aures*] communicated to me to ease his conscience.

I then, Sire, unite with my poor companions, who are continually giving missions in the hamlets of your kingdom, and we conjure your Majesty to protect our humble Association. This protection is above all necessary at the present time when we are attacked on all sides; for I have learned that our house at Iliceto is the object of nearly the same accusations. Those persons who have carried these complaints to the foot of your throne are, I suppose, in accord with Baron Sarnelli, and they hope by such united efforts to bring about our ruin.

As for ourselves, the piety of your Majesty re-assures us. You will efficaciously protect, we hope, a work that evangelizes thousands of your subjects who are abandoned

in the country, and that renders them faithful to your Majesty by rendering them faithful to God through the instrumentality of the missions.

I pray to God to grant your Majesty every temporal and eternal happiness, and while offering you the homage of profound respect, I have the honor to be,

Your Majesty's,

Most humble and obedient subject,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,

Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, Rector Major of the Association of the Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 555.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to persevere in her mode of life and to bear her troubles patiently.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NAPLES [August 1767].

You must know that by sending me these presents you have made me have the thought either to answer you no more, or to be so impolite as to send them back to you.

I answer your letter.

All goes well; yes, all goes well. In the first place, the Cardinal does not look upon you as foolish after what he has told me; but he thinks that in the state in which you are living at present you can sanctify yourself better than in the Hermitage.

If a few words escaped him at S. Marcellino, it was to please those nuns that cannot see you follow such a vocation.

However, I beg you to remain as you are at present, trusting in God, and without thinking of anything else. The aridity, the confusion in presence of the religious, the reproaches, the injuries, are so many graces of God, who aids you to unite yourself more perfectly to Jesus Christ. I am happy to know that you preserve your peace of mind in the midst of humiliations. I pray to God to give you perseverance, and you will surely reach sanctity; for I assure you, on my soul and on my conscience, that your present mode of living is agreeable to our Lord.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, and for pity's sake no more presents.

Let me know next week or the week after whether you have a confessor, because I hope to be able to rob myself of a little time to go to hear you.

But try to find rest and perfect peace.

It will be necessary for me to thank the Abbess who, without my knowing why, has sent me a large basket of sweetmeats.

May Jesus and Mary make you a saint!

Yours most humbly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original which in 1865 was found in Rome in possession of Father Mosa, S. J.

LETTER 556.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to perseverance and makes known to her what is God's will in her regard.

[NAPLES, August 1767.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

You are afflicted; and as for me, I am very glad on

account of the storms that afflict you: all these storms will conduct you into port.

I regret that you have given up Communion. Since Father Savastano is absent at Conocchia, I command you under obedience to receive Communion without going to confession. If you do not wish to obey me, write to that Father, and he will prescribe the same thing. But you may safely obey me, for Father Savastano is of the same opinion with me.

For the present I cannot go to see you. Our case has been settled, I must go home and attend to some writings, etc. But I will see you before my departure.

I declare to you in the name of God that you are in the state of grace, and that all goes well; do not, therefore, ever use the words: *I have mistaken my vocation.*

I tell you, moreover, that it is the will of God that you should live and die at S. Marcellino. Be therefore resigned, and I repeat that all goes well.

Offer all to Jesus Christ, and recommend me to him as well as to his divine Mother; also recommend the Congregation, that its affairs may come to a successful issue.

May Jesus be the only master of your heart.

Yours most humbly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] All that you now suffer I have predicted; but everything is going on well. Resume at once your Communions; I take all on my conscience, etc.

After an old copy.

LETTER 557.

To the Lawyer, Don Gaetano Celano.

He suggests to him the answer in order to refute the charges of Baron Sarnelli.

[NAPLES, August 1767.]

All the reasons put forth by the baron to reclaim the possession of the vineyard may be reduced, it appears, to this: We transgressed more than once the royal ordinances; hence the vineyard should revert by right to him as the heir of his brother Andrea who died intestate. He does not then take into account the donations that have been made of this vineyard, first, to Father Alfonso de Liguori, then, to the Archbishop of Salerno, and he declares that the aforesaid transgressions have rendered null all the donations of this kind made in favor of the Fathers.

The first transgression (which is the most important, says the baron) was that, in 1735, I sought to acquire the vineyard by means of the donation which was made to me by Don Andrea. And he endeavors to prove by different writings that if after the notarial acts, the vineyard was given to me, it was in reality understood that the ownership of it was given to the Congregation, which however could not acquire it. The donation made to me by Don Andrea and that which I made to the Fathers in 1752, have without doubt been approved by the ordinance of the king; *but this transgression*, he says, *has rendered the Fathers unworthy of this approbation.*

I answer, that in this there was not a shadow of transgression. Since the declaration of the king, it is true, the Congregation has no longer the legal capacity of acquiring property; but before this ordinance of December 15, 1752, the Fathers believed in good faith that their Community could acquire annual revenues. Their good faith is evi-

dently proved by the fact that the founders of the other houses having offered to the Fathers certain immovable estates and annual revenues, the latter accepted them, notarial acts having been drawn up for this purpose. This was done for the houses of Iliceto, Caposele and Nocera. As for Nocera in particular, a very remarkable incident occurred. The founder of this house, after having given to the Fathers landed property and a house, quarrelled with them, alleging that their Community could not legally acquire annual revenues. Now the affair having been referred to the Council, the Fathers gained the suit as is proved by the acts preserved at the tribunal. But later on when the ordinance appeared, declaring them incapable of acquiring annual revenues, they were obliged to relinquish the aforesaid immovable estates of which they had till then possession. Where is then the transgression, since before the publication of the royal decree the Court had declared them capable of acquiring property?

Let us pass to the other transgressions.

The second is: *The Fathers*, says the baron, *have administered the revenues of the vineyard even after the ordinance which had intrusted the administration to the economists appointed by the bishops.*

An answer has already been given to this, namely: The economists have administered the revenues, and the Fathers have sent lay-brothers to work in the vineyard to assist in cultivating it. If they did this, it was not for the purpose of assuming the rôle of administrators, but in order to draw from the vineyard the subsidy of a *tarì* assigned to them by the king,—a subsidy which they did not wish to lose.

The third transgression is this: *The Fathers made a bargain with the Archbishop of Salerno that he should give up to them the revenues of the vineyard, even though these revenues would exceed the sum of five hundred ducats given*

to me by Don Andrea, then transferred by me to the Congregation.

The following is the answer: This agreement with the archbishop was not made by the Fathers, but by Don Andrea himself who wished to conclude it, the better to secure the existence of our house at Ciorani. This bargain was, moreover, conformable to the will of the king, as the latter had already arranged that the archbishop should give to each subject of this house a *tarì* a day taken from the revenues of the vineyard.

This charge of transgression could have been made against us if the vineyard had yielded more than five hundred ducats, given to me by Don Andrea, then transferred by me to the Community; but this has not been the case, nor will it ever be the case; for the vineyard cannot yield more than three hundred ducats, or at the highest, four hundred.

The baron, moreover, pretends to prove that we have acquired more than five hundred ducats. He says, indeed, that Don Andrea Sarnelli gave us in 1752, five hundred ducats by a donation from which he could not recede; but he reserved for himself three hundred ducats, and consequently the sum amounts to eight hundred ducats. Therefore, by acquiring the whole vineyard the Fathers acquired a sum greater than five hundred ducats approved by the king.

First answer: The three hundred ducats which Don Andrea reserved to himself were to be taken from the five hundred ducats.

Second answer: One may appraise the revenues of the vineyard, and one will see that at present when it is entirely cultivated, it does not yield five hundred ducats; much less could it have yielded this sum, when it was not cultivated.

Third answer: Let us admit as true the figure put forward by the baron; the transgression would then have been

committed not by the Fathers, but by Don Andrea, and the archbishop.

The fourth transgression consists in this: *By the transaction passed in 1755, the Fathers bound themselves to pay the baron a thousand ducats to remove the claims raised against the vineyard.*

Answer: If the Fathers then bound themselves to pay these thousand ducats, this was not in order to gain possession of the vineyard, but in order that the claims of the baron being removed, the archbishop might furnish us with the subsidy of a *tarì* assigned to each by the king.

But the Fathers, they again say, *have a novitiate, have Rules, and a great number of subjects.*

I answer: The king has declared that he wished to see the work maintained in its first fervor; who can then be made to believe that he wished to forbid the receiving into the Association of new subjects to replace those who die and those who are dismissed, as such a prohibition would suppress the work or at least considerably weaken it? This being the case; it is much less credible that the king wished to hinder us from subjecting to trial during a certain time the young men who wish to enter the Congregation; for they should be trained to piety, to the practice of the missions, and, finally, to a kind of common life in accordance with our customs; otherwise our houses would become abodes of troubles and disputes.

The king having, therefore, permitted us to live in community, we must necessarily suppose that he authorizes, that he even wishes that our life should be one of subjection to the directors of the work.

Another objection of the baron. The royal ordinance was a particular and personal favor granted to the Fathers who were alive at the time of its promulgation. These Fathers having died, the favor disappeared with them.

But we have said above: "The king has declared that he

was desirous to see the work always maintained, and in its first fervor." These words of the prince do not agree with the interpretation of the baron.

The latter again says: *Once the tarì has been given to each subject, that which is over and above the income should be distributed among the poor; now this has not been done.*

Answer: The revenues are so moderate that they are not sufficient to furnish each subject even with five grains.[1]

The baron finally says that for the village of Ciorani one Father and a half are sufficient.

I answer: To provide for the spiritual interests of the whole place, to give the missions that we are obliged to give, one Father and a half cannot be sufficient.

After the original manuscript preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 558.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He admonishes her to be patient amid aridities.

[NAPLES, end of August 1767.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I am happy to learn that you have gone to Communion, and that you wish to continue doing so without the necessity of going to confession for this purpose. Communicate by obedience; I will take that on my conscience, and be accountable to God for it.

I am also very glad that you are doing everything with constraint, without relish, and even with tediousness and pain. Fire takes away rust.

That ray of interior light that you had the other day was really, I assure you, a ray of divine light. You would like

[1] 0.21 fr.

that this light should continue always; but if it continued, you would have very little to offer to God.

Oh! how much more profitable is it for you to walk in darkness, in the midst of anguish and terrors, than to walk in the light of the day with a sensible joy!

I tell you that the Lord wishes you to belong entirely to himself, and that in his mercy he desires to conduct you to a sublime state. Be careful to obey, and allow yourself to be directed by your spiritual Fathers without wishing to know their motives; do not impede the operations of grace.

How all these trials will one day console you! Always support yourself by prayers to Jesus crucified, to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Blessed Virgin, and never seek sensible consolations on earth. *All that we suffer for a God who died for us is indeed too little.*

I thank you for the pomegranates that you have sent me. They will be relished by my sister-in-law who comes to Naples this morning. You know, that I eat but little of these sweet things that injure both body and soul.

I shall try to go to see you, but only a short time before my departure. In the meanwhile, do not omit Communion, and act in such a way that I may find you in all things contented and resigned to the disposition of the divine will in your regard. I bless you, and remain,

Yours most humbly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 559.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to despise certain vain fears. — Eulogy of solitary life.

[NAPLES, month of September, 1767.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I have read your letter.

My departure is only the departure of a creature; we should fear only one thing, that is, that God may depart from us. The Lord wishes that I should assist you by prayer; as I shall do, but not by my presence.

May God forbid that you should be so frivolous as to take for your companion a lay-sister or any other on account of your fear of the dead! The dead are occupied with what concerns them, and do not think of showing themselves to us. For pity's sake do not give way any more to such imaginations. I assure you that in your cell you have neither demons nor the dead.

Enjoy your solitude, which is the desire of so many religious that cannot obtain it. God wishes that you be a solitary in order that you may think of him and become attached to him only.

Everything else that you write to me about your state of aridity you have already told me, and I have already answered you on that subject. If your aridity increases, increase in yourself resignation; and it is sufficient that this resignation be effected with the superior part of the will without any sensibility.

I thank you for your little presents. You always wish to inconvenience yourself on my account: but I only desire that you should recommend me to Jesus Christ in order that he may make me accomplish his will; this is the best gift that I expect to receive from you.

Jesus Christ should take for you the place of brother, sister, father, spouse, and everything; but you know that the more lovely this Spouse is, the more jealous he is. *Pulchræ sunt genæ tuæ sicut turturis.* [Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's.—*Cant.* i. 9.] He wishes you to be as solitary as the turtle-dove that avoids all company except that of its spouse. Yes, be a solitary turtle-dove in order to be all for Jesus, who deserves the entire love of all our hearts, but especially of your own, because of the special affection that he bears towards you; if you reserve anything to yourself and do not give him your whole heart, he cannot be satisfied with you.

I hear, O Lord, Thy voice divine
That calls to me from Heaven above,
To be henceforth entirely Thine,
For love divided is not love.[1]

Oh! how beautiful is suffering, how beautiful is love: to love in suffering, and to suffer in loving! May the Holy Spirit fill your whole heart with his holy love!

Yours most humbly,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

[1] Già t'intendo, o mio Signore,
Tu mi vuoi tutta per te,
Non ha vero amor l'amore
Che in amar diviso egli è.

LETTER 560.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Caposele.

He censures a worldly style of preaching and recommends exact observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 3, 1767.

I hear fine things about the Fathers of your house. Some preach with affected manner and tone; others nourish pretensions that no one should be preferred to them; others again seek to promote their popularity by criticising; great coldness and repugnance are exhibited in working for the salvation of souls; some are fastidious about themselves; every one would like to act after his own fashion; and obedience is thought very little of. After that, why should we complain of the persecutions that the Congregation suffers? For myself, I fear more the faults of our confrères than all persecutions, which are still continuing; and if we keep on committing faults, the Lord will abandon us, and we shall see our Congregation, our houses, and all the rest end in smoke.

This letter should be read to the Community in Chapter. I bless and embrace you all in Jesus and Mary.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

[*P. S.*] You already know that I spent several months at Naples, where, thank God! I have left things in a prosperous condition; but the storm was severe and has not yet passed.

Hence I beg you to continue the use of the discipline on Mondays and the fast on Saturdays,—a fast that we have promised the Blessed Virgin to continue always in recognition of her help in overcoming the present persecutions.

I also inform you that we, the Consultors and I, have

thought it well to appoint Father Cimino as Consultor in place of Father Ferrara.[1]

I bless you, Reverend Father, and all your subjects. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 561.

To Father Carlo Gaiano,[2] Rector of the House at Ciorani.

Recommendations in regard to the practice of religious virtues.

ARIENZO, October 3, 1767.

. . . . . I beg your Reverence to recommend to all your subjects observance, humility, and fraternal charity; also warn them not to complain of poverty; tell them to bear humiliations, and not to desire to be preferred to others; much less should they contradict the Superiors and resist their orders.

Breeches of discipline it is that make me tremble more than all persecutions.

[1] Father Girolamo Ferrara had died, August 22, of this year 1767, at S. Agata de' Goti, whither he had gone to use the mineral waters.

[2] Father Carlo Gaiano was born May 9, 1701, at Spiano, in the archdiocese of Salerno. After having spent his youth in the practice of virtue, he consecrated himself to the service of God, became a priest and directed for several years the important parish at Saragnano where he established a convent for nuns according to the Rule of St. Francis de Paul. At the age of fifty, he entered the Congregation in which he made his profession, October 2, 1751. Father Gaiano was a fervent missionary. To him was twice intrusted the government of the house at Ciorani, and he had the happiness of completing the building of the church, which was solemnly consecrated, November 27, 1769. In the month of July, 1770, he was sent as Superior to give missions in Puglia, where in the midst of apostolic labors in the city of Minervino he died a holy death, December 7, of the same year.

Let us be faithful to God: Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin will then surely come to our aid.

Quoted by Father Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter x.

LETTER 562.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to practise perfect detachment.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 10, 1767.

I rejoice that you have had something to offer to Jesus Christ in consequence of the meeting you had with your enemies, as the Gospel calls relatives: *Inimici hominis, domestici ejus.* [A man's enemies shall be they of his own household. — *Matt.* x. 36.][1] That such an occurrence should have left a disagreeable impression upon you does not astonish me; for you are weak, like all creatures of flesh and blood.

Sister Hieronyma Sanfelice, of the monastery of Donn' Alvina, as is related in the Life of Father Torres, did so much violence to herself in order not to appear before her nephews, who had come to see her at least at the grate of the church, that she fainted while drawing the curtain, so as not to see them. I am, therefore, not displeased that you are still troubled about that affair; it would, however, be to me a source of great displeasure, if you would deliberately dwell upon the love of your relatives and upon the tenderness that you have felt in their regard. This sensibility is an effect of sin and of the earthly clay from which you are sprung.

[1] These words of the Gospel extend here to parents who oppose in one way or another the vocation of their children. In the eighteenth century this opposition was frequent in the kingdom of Naples.

Only Jesus Christ deserves all our affections; he who has shown us so great love by giving us himself entirely in his Passion and in the Sacrament of the Altar. There are other marks of tenderness than to come to the convent at S. Marcellino to see you work in the garden! O my God! when will it be that free from these violent passions, we shall think only of Thee, and love nothing but Thee?

I am convinced that the Lord will have given you some spiritual consolation before sending you this little trial. Oh, how good God is! How careful he is to strengthen us before exposing us to the combat! O infinite Love! whom shall we love if we do not love Thee?

You must not think of the Hermitage. It is evident that it is at S. Marcellino, and not in the Retreat of Sister Orsola, that God has prepared for you your hermitage. Be grateful to the Lord, and pray to him to grant you perseverance and fidelity; in eternity you will understand the greatness of the grace with which Jesus Christ has favored you, and which his holy Mother has obtained for you by her intercession, to enable you to live a solitary life in the midst of the Babylon of S. Marcellino.[1]

Never omit Communion unless your director tells you to do so.

I should like you to procure for yourself the "Imitation of Christ" of Thomas à Kempis, translated into the vernacular. Do not, however, buy the small edition which everybody uses, but the large edition printed at Naples in 1756, and which is sold by the bookseller Alfano, opposite the church of S. Filippo and Giacomo; each chapter is followed by very beautiful reflections and devout prayers. It is a golden book, and I read some of it every day.

[1] The convent of S. Marcellino was, in fact, a kind of Babylon in comparison with the Retreat of the Venerable Orsola Benincasa, as silence and solitude were not so perfect there as at the Hermitage. The Rule, however, was well observed, and St. Alphonsus later permitted his niece to enter there.

Books are of great help to persons who lead a solitary life do not fail, therefore, to buy that one as soon as you can.

Continue to pray for me; for my part I continue to pray for you, and I bless you.

Believe me, my dear Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 563.

To Count di Cerreto, Tutor of the Son of the Duke of Maddaloni.

He asks him to remove a scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 11, 1767.

I have been informed of an occurrence which gives me great pain and which I should communicate to your Excellency. At Cologna, a village on the outskirts of Sant' Agata, there is a young woman named Carmina Graziano who, though once very pious, has become a real demon. She keeps open house in this little town, and causes immense evil to all the young men in the surrounding villages, and even to those at Sant' Agata. The rivalries and jealousies that reign among them on her account are numerous. Some time ago a violent quarrel arose, in which, I am told, there was an exchange of shots between the contending parties.

There is only one measure to be taken for so great an evil. It is that you write a few lines to the governor, telling him to banish this woman twenty miles from Sant' Agata. It is the only means to make this scandal cease, for all the admonitions hitherto given have been of no avail.

It is admitted that one might tolerate public women in

large places; but in villages and small towns one cannot do this, since young people and families are ruined thereby.

I have already spoken about this affair to Don Francesco Mostillo and to the governor, Don Nicola Pisanti; but they will do nothing till they receive an order from your Excellency.

As for myself, I have no other hope, nor any other means of succeeding in this affair than the favor of your Excellency, who have so much zeal for the glory of God and for the good of the subjects of your illustrious house.

I anxiously count on your kind intervention. Please accept the assurance of my profound respect. I have the honor to be,

Your Excellency's

Most humble and devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 564.

To Don Baldassare Cito, President of the Royal Council.

He begs him to protect the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

ARIENZO, October 22, 1767.

. . . . For these and other reasons I recommend myself to your charity. I trust in God that your Excellency will deliver us from this persecution, and God will reward you in this life and in the next. When I established this work I certainly did not aim at obtaining the name of founder. I only proposed to myself to do a work agreeable to God. Now a long experience has proved that so far this work has procured great glory to God; and, therefore, I regard it as

certain that the Lord will give a great reward to him who defends it.

I have the honor to be, with profound respect, with sentiments of perfect esteem,

Your Excellency's

Most devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After an old copy.

LETTER 565.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He consoles her in her trials and gives her some advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 7, 1767.

That is nothing, that is nothing; or rather all goes well, since God wishes it so. You weep, and I am glad, because I see that God positively wishes to conduct you to sanctity; for it is in this manner that we sanctify ourselves.

The Lord one day made St. Rose of Lima see several young persons who were cutting marble; the water that they used for this purpose was composed of their tears. There is no other way: we must cut marble and shed tears of sorrow. This pain is a fire that purifies the soul.

I know that you do not seek for sensible consolation; only you tremble to see yourself in this state of darkness and insensibility in which you are in regard to things that of themselves excite devotion. But if you had not this fear and this pain, where would be the trial that God wishes to make of your love? and if you knew that this is a trial from God, where would be the pain?

St. Francis de Sales says: "The best thing to do is to

walk like a blind man in the midst of the darkness and the perplexities of this life; we must be satisfied to know from our spiritual Father that we are doing well." Now I tell you in the name of God that you are walking on the right road; continue to walk thus without seeking anything else.

The following are three points that you should observe in the state in which you are at present: 1. Humble yourself by saying: O Lord! I well deserve to be thus treated. 2. Be resigned by always saying: O Lord! treat me as Thou pleasest; it suffices that I love Thee. 3. Pray with confidence; and as to this confidence it will not be necessary that it should be felt: it is sufficient that you really wish it; you may then say: O Lord! have pity on me. My Jesus, mercy! Mary, my Mother, do not abandon me. My God, I do not ask for Thy consolations; help me to love Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt.

As for exterior persecutions, they increase my joy, and they should also increase yours. God does not hate you, no; I assure you that he loves you, and that you love him. Oh! how glad I am that you see yourself so miserable before God! You are so in fact; but God loves the miserable that love him.

I regret that you do not find the book of Thomas à Kempis; but I will give an order for it and will try to find it. It costs six *carlini*.[1] I fear, however, that the edition is exhausted; this is possible.

I continue to pray every day for you, and I am confident that you do not forget me.

Go on courageously, offering yourself to God, to remain thus till death, and even for all eternity, if such be his good pleasure. Each similar offering is more agreeable to God and more meritorious than ten fasts on bread and water.

[1] 2.50 frs.

May the Holy Spirit fill your heart with love for Jesus Christ!

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 566.

To the Same.

Contempt that she should show for certain temptations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 18 [1767].

I have good news concerning Father Savastano and all the Jesuits: they will not leave Naples as it was said; this would have been the ruin of the whole city.[1]

[1] Through the physician Vandegane, Tanucci did indeed give to the Jesuits of Naples the assurance that they had nothing to fear. But on October 31, it was decided that they should share the same fate as the Jesuits of Spain, and on November 20, the sentence was carried out. (Father de Ravignan, *Clement XIII. and Clement XIV.* volume ii. p. 390.) We know with what brutality this expulsion was consummated. The Sovereign Pontiff Clement XIII. in his letter of December 29, addressed to Cardinal Sersale, Archbishop of Naples, thus expressed himself: "Incredibilem Nobis dolorem intulit Clericorum regularium Societatis Jesu gravissimus casus, quorum ecclesiis et domibus noctu ex improviso militari manu circumsessis, ipsi comprehensi totoque isto Regno properanter pulsi in exilium, et ad Regni fines abrepti, tandem projecti sunt in ecclesiasticam nostram ditionem. . . ." (It is with very great sorrow that We have learned of the horrible attack, of which the regular clerics of the Society of Jesus have been the victims, and how, after having their churches and houses surrounded by night with an armed force, they have been seized, and hurriedly banished from the Neapolitan kingdom, having been conducted to the frontiers of the kingdom, and finally thrown upon the lands subject to Our jurisdiction.)

As for the inordinate affection that you feel for your relatives, and as for the movements of pride, etc., do not be uneasy; it suffices that you do not give occasion to them in a positive manner. We are all of us filled with inordinate inclinations; but the goodness of Jesus Christ and prayer furnish a remedy for everything.

I am occupied in composing a book on the "Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ." I have inserted therein many interesting things concerning the love that Jesus Christ has for us, and the love that we owe him.

I repeat, that when you are troubled with annoying thoughts about relatives, about sensuality, about pride, etc., you should act as you would if a dog barked at you when you are passing by: you would continue your way without taking any notice of the barking. Act in the same way in regard to these thoughts; despise them, and proceed on your way.

Pray to Jesus and Mary for me.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 567.

To the Same.

He tells her how to behave in the absence of her director.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 28 [1767?].

It is well understood that you must always follow the Rule laid down for you by Father Savastano and conform

yourself to all the orders that he gives you; but you need a director who can always assist you orally. As for myself, how can I help you from afar and by letters?

This is more easy now that I reside at Arienzo; but in the month of June when I am to make the Visitation at Sant' Agata and at other places of my diocese, it may happen that you will have to wait three or four weeks for an answer to your letters.

Add to this that I am old and decrepit; my life then cannot last long. I have been in bed the past eight days with fever and catarrh of the chest, and last night was the worst of all. However, while waiting to find another director, you may write to me. I will answer you as much as shall be needed, but briefly, and only what is necessary.

Your way of life is already known to me. At present I positively forbid you again to mention in confession your past sins; and in future, whatever may be the doubts about the consent you have given in any matter whatsoever, you must not confess them. To confess them you must clearly see and be able to swear that you have committed a mortal sin. Never omit Communions in consideration of these doubts, whether they be past or present.

Faithfully obey me in this point; for in the matter of obedience I am very severe. If you disobey, I will forbid you Communion for a month or two.

As regards penances, be satisfied for the present with taking the discipline during a quarter of an hour. We shall speak about other mortifications as soon as you are entirely restored to health.

I do not wish you to lament any more for having lost Father Savastano; lamentation about that is lamentation about the will of God. Jesus Christ is our real support, our true brother, our true director, the true and only love

of our souls. He is not pleased if we seek consolation outside of him.

I bless you and remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 568.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He requests a decision in regard to episcopal revenues.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December, 1767.

Permit me to renew my request on the subject of the pasturage of Bagnoli; please ask Signor Mazzacchera to render a final decision on this matter.

I have been waiting in vain until the present time; and now that I am confined to my bed, this question about the pasturage disquiets and torments me, for my catarrh of the chest has lasted these past two weeks, and I do not know what will be the result. This affair has been pending these two years, and I need not tell your Excellency that this delay is prejudicial to the episcopal revenues.

I learned this morning that Signor Mazzacchera has been made judge of the Vicaría; but that will not prevent him from rendering a decision about the point of which I am speaking, especially as he understands the question at issue.

Awaiting a favorable answer, I beg your Excellency to accept the expression of profound respect and

of perfect devotion, with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agatá.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 569.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Counsels about direction.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 18, 1767.

O my God! I no longer wish to hear the words *Very bad state.* But for pity's sake do not omit holy Communion; go to Communion in whatever condition you find yourself—whether cold, very cold, or distracted. Do not say anything to me about abandonment by God.

No, I do not permit you even once to sleep on the floor. Do you perhaps wish to lose your mind? As you are still weak, you will not do wrong to take a little more rest, and to allow yourself some indulgence in your diet in order to repair the loss of strength caused by your illness.

As for the Communions prescribed by Father N., I do not wish you to omit them—no, never, never; for you know how strict I am on this point; and it does not matter that you have not gone to confession.

In reference to Father N., would to God, ...; but under present circumstances the thing is impossible at this moment. We know not what God will do later on; but years and years will have to elapse after my death and

yours.[1] Be calm, therefore, by submitting yourself to the will of God; to be troubled is a great fault. When any disquieting thought comes to your mind, say: Lord! Thou hast wished it so; this is also my wish.

Tell me: to sanctify yourself, is Father N., or God necessary to you? Who told you, that with Father N., and not without him, you would sanctify yourself? Let us, therefore, conclude once for all: By virtue of obedience, speak no more to me of Father N., nor of your bad state, nor of your abandonment by God; I do not wish to hear another word about these things. Continue what you are doing as well as you can, and God will aid you.

Do not listen to your relatives, nor to those that bring you messages. Do not give up your ordinary exercises, even when you perform them without devotion; God will supply what is wanting.

You will already have received my book the *Way of Salvation;* I beg you to read from time to time the short considerations that are found at the end, entitled *Darts of Fire*.[2] I read them myself nearly every day, and they seem to me to be suitable to you.

Pray to Jesus Christ for me; I am colder than you, but I trust in the blood of Jesus Christ and in our Mother Mary, and this is what we should all do. It belongs to God to sanctify us, and not to us, nor to our spiritual Fathers.

I wish you to preserve my letters, because I cannot be so diffuse in my other answers, nor repeat the same things. Be careful to read them over from time to time, especially when you are losing confidence.

[1] There is probably question here about the return of the Jesuit Fathers expelled from the kingdom of Naples.

[2] The *Way of Salvation* and the *Darts of Fire* are two little works written by the saint.

May Jesus Christ fill you with his holy love!

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 570.

To Don Francesco Gaetani, Duke of Sermoneta and Prince of Teano.

He asks a favor of him.

[January] 4, 1768.

The extreme kindness, which you have always shown to me, encourages me to ask you for a particular favor.

Since entering upon my charge, I have had for my Vicar-General, Abbè Don Giovanni Nicola Rubini, at present fifty-three years of age. He belongs to a very distinguished family; for sixteen years he has fulfilled the duties of a Vicar-General, and I have been able to appreciate his learning, his wisdom, his integrity and his moderation. I would, therefore, greatly wish to see him promoted to some episcopate, as I recognize in him the qualities that make a good bishop.

The church at Soria being vacated at the present time, I earnestly beg you to use your influence in favor of Rubini that he may receive the appointment; this will be the more easy now that he is at Rome.

He is a deserving subject, and I believe that this choice will be agreeable to God. I count, therefore, on the good offices of your Excellency, and while awaiting your orders, I sign myself,

Your very humble, very devoted,
and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

[*Postscript written by the hand of the saint.*] I beg your

Excellency to grant me this favor, and I count on your usual kindness.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of the Gaetani family.

LETTER 571.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to pray for the Church and for Naples.—Important advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 10, 1768.

I have received your letter, and I answer that this is not a time for lamenting over desolations and temptations, but it is a time for praying continually day and night to Jesus Christ for the Church that is assailed on all sides—especially for this poor Naples, already ruined, and threatened with still greater ruin. If those persons that love Jesus Christ and are zealous for his honor, do not pray under these circumstances, who then will pray?

In regard to the new Abbess, I do not think that you should live as a solitary, but that you should be a saint. Now the means of sanctifying yourself is to do, not what you wish, but what God wishes. If, then, God disposes things in such a manner as to make known to you that he does not wish you to be any longer in solitude, nor in the cell that has been assigned to you, nor in the kind of life that you have begun, you must obey the will of God.

If, however, the Abbess wishes you to follow the Rule of the Community, humbly answer her by saying that you

[1] For reasons unknown to us Abbè Rubini was not appointed to the episcopal See of Soria. In his stead the appointment fell to the lot of Giuseppe Maria Butto, a Theatine, who governed this church from March 14, 1768, till 1797.

have begun to live in the monastery as you do under obedience to the Cardinal, who is the Superior of all; and if you see that the Abbess persists, you must write to the Cardinal. But in this case it would be better to call privately upon the Abbess and humbly beg her to have the kindness to allow you to continue; then tell her your miseries, namely, that in Community life you would commit a thousand faults, you would be attached to creatures, and the like things that you can tell better than I. In this way you would obtain all that you require.

Moreover, I repeat, if God wishes that you should retire into solitude, you must obey him even though there be question of life or death.

Now that you are suffering from a little fever, omit all mortifications, even the use of the discipline. We shall again speak of this when you are entirely restored.

The temptations to blasphemy and the like are all useful to excite you to have recourse to God and to unite you to him more and more.

It is certain that Mgr. Testa has assured you of your vocation; he has told you so himself, and has so written to me; do not, then, listen to what others say.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, and do not fail to pray for the Church, and above all for Naples; pray without ceasing. I bless you.

I remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 572.

To Prince della Riccia.

He begs him to remove a soldier who was giving scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 22, 1768.

Your Excellency will say, that I am importunate in the highest degree; and you will be right; but necessity obliges me to incur this imputation.

Some time ago your Excellency, at my request, was pleased to remove from the district of N., subject to your jurisdiction, fusileer N., whose bad conduct scandalized all these poor people.

The circumstances are at present still more sad, for this district has become the theatre of troubles and continual scandals; for the other fusileers come from Monte Sarchio, where they live, and give themselves up to frightful disorders. Among them there is a certain N., who tempts all the young women he meets, and who goes day and night even to respectable houses to gratify his passions. So true is this state of things, that even on last Saturday, not being able to accomplish his purpose with a poor girl who vigorously resisted him, he struck her on the head with a stiletto.

May your Excellency be so kind as to order their commandant to remove from this district the fusileers who are natives of this place, and especially N., who has shown himself more perverse than others.

Your Excellency, I am sure, wishes to procure the peace of your vassals and at the same time the glory of God, and will listen favorably to my request. Begging you to accept the expression of profound respect, with which . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 573.

To Sister Brianna Carafa.

Line of conduct that she should follow.—Answers to difficulties.

[End of January, 1768.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

When you write to me, do not say any more: *Give me leave to* . . . . Write to me freely whenever it is necessary; I will answer you sometimes in a few words, sometimes more fully, according to your wants.

I sympathize with you in the trouble that you have had on account of the new confessor. What is to be done? Offer this to God and proceed quietly.

You are following this kind of life with the blessing of the Cardinal, as also that of Father Savastano, and with mine, since in his absence I am your director. Let others say what they please; it suffices that you do the will of God, and you are certainly doing his holy will, and the best thing is to fulfill this will in the midst of contradictions and contempt.

I rejoice that at present you have to suffer even from poverty; all this contributes towards uniting you more closely to God. That you are sensitive in regard to such things, I am not astonished; for sensitiveness lies in human nature, and you are still in this world. If you should commit a fault in regard to this, make an act of love and of contrition, and pursue your way.

No, certainly, you are not under an illusion; I am answerable before God for the life that you have embraced. I only fear that these contradictions may induce you to renounce it and make you lose your crown.

I shall also repeat to you always: If the Abbess gives you some employment in the monastery, accept it, even though it would expose you to distractions. If she puts you in

charge of the door or of the turn, write to the Cardinal about this; and if he tells you to do what the Abbess orders, or if he does not answer you, be portress, attend to the turn and to all that the Abbess commands you to do; even if she should order you to go sometimes to the grate, go there. It suffices that you do what God wishes.

This advice is just; receive it once for all. You see, moreover, that God assists you with the Abbess, since she sends others to the grate, and keeps you in retirement. What more do you desire? Thank God for this.

But let us return to our affairs. In the first place, in regard to Communion, why do you omit it? how can you make progress in this manner? For mercy's sake, do not act so any more. Even though you had committed a thousand faults, as long as there is no grievous sin, and this so certain that you can affirm it on oath, communicate always, always, and never abstain from it. I again recommend to you obedience on this point; otherwise you will have to pardon me for telling you to look for another director.

As for bodily mortifications, now that you have so much work to do, and must run so much to and fro, lay aside the little chains or the *cilicium;* it is enough that you use the discipline once a day, and morning and evening during the novenas.

As for prayer, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi said that all that one does for the monastery is prayer. When you have a little free time, give up useless conversation, and give all that time to God. Do not be disturbed, if you find yourself dissipated, cold, dry, without relish; it suffices that you have the intention to please God.

Do you not see the graces that God confers upon you? Instead of being joyful on that account, you are always lamenting. I wish you to be despised, to be sick, dry,

abandoned by every one; but always satisfied, always full of confidence in Jesus and Mary.

As for the confessor, I wish you to present yourself to him once a week, or at least every two weeks, in order to receive absolution. If he still says, that you are laboring under an illusion, keep silence, do not answer; be satisfied to say to him that you are ready to do what the Abbess commands you, and only ask him to give you absolution, if he is willing.

Thus confine yourself to telling your faults; add nothing more. If he forbids you Communion, you are not obliged to obey him, unless at times he expressly imposes this prohibition as a sacramental penance; but he will not give you this penance.

Never forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ after Communion, and tell the confessor that at present I am directing you. Perhaps he may then become contented.

Finally, I would recommend to you, that whenever you have time, you visit the sick, and assist them in their necessities, especially if these are servants; do not mind, if on this account you omit your exercises of piety.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 574.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to obey her director.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 13, 1768.

For a long time I have not received any letters from you. This has made me rejoice to think that you have already found a good director.

Perhaps the thought may have come to you, that I do not wish to see you under the direction of another. But you may remember, that I advised you to have a director from the very beginning, because you need some one that will speak to you by word of mouth and will continually assist you; and this could not be done from such a distance.

I beg you, then, to inform me, whether I am right in my conjectures; for I very much desire your sanctification, knowing how much Jesus Christ wishes this himself. Your last letters made me fear that you had abandoned everything, because I noticed in you great discouragement and little obedience to what I had prescribed, especially in regard to never omitting Communion.

Now here is what I recommend to you: Obey blindly in all things your present director, even if he should order you to leave your cell and to go to the parlor. I hope that such a thing will not happen; however, if he wishes you to do so, obey him; it would be a sign that such is at present the will of God.

I beg you to inform me about this matter; if, however, your director should have forbidden you to write to me in future, you must also obey in this point. It will then be sufficient to let me know your state through Sister Antonia de' Liguori,[1] by telling her to write to me. For my part I shall continue to pray especially for you, and I am convinced that you have not excluded me from the number of those whom you recommend to the Lord.

Take courage; and do not listen to the devil, who wishes to ruin you by a want of confidence. Be obedient, and you will always walk securely.

[1] Sister Antonia de' Liguori was a cousin of our saint.

Recommend me to Jesus and Mary.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 575.

To the Same.

Frequent Communion.—Obedience.—Various admonitions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 20, 1768.

For your own good and your consolation I was in hopes that you would find a spiritual Father. I repeat, if you can find one, take him; for direction by word of mouth is always best.

As for Father Pisanelli, it is impossible to let you have him. I should wish that you would go at least from time to time to the ordinary confessor; but you say that you feel a great repugnance to do so. See whether you cannot overcome this repugnance, and present yourself to him at least every two weeks, not to receive advice, but only to obtain absolution from him.

At least try to come to an understanding with some other religious, who has her spiritual Father, so that you may be able to speak to him.

It would be very difficult for me to go to Naples. During winter I always remain at home. Notwithstanding this, I suffer from my chest; but this morning I was able to sit up. In summer I must make the Visitation of my diocese, and last year I omitted making it in order to visit Naples.

I wish, however, to make myself useful to you as much

as I can, and I do so willingly, because God inspires me with great zeal for your soul. However, I regret to see you showing so little obedience. You write me many fine things, and you do not say that you have received Communion every day.

Your pretended blasphemies, your hatred of God, the fervor that you have lost, your despair, etc.,—all that does not affect me in the least; what displeases me is that you often omit Communion. Since this is so, the Abbess is right when she reproves you, because you do not frequent the sacraments; for such conduct is not in harmony with the desire to attain perfection.

Obey the Abbess in all exterior things; it does not matter, that in order to do so, you must omit prayers, spiritual reading, and other exercises, and that you have continually to speak and to go to and fro. I bless your steps and your words, but I do not wish you to omit Communion under any circumstances whatever.

Every time that you cannot swear at first sight that you are in mortal sin, you should communicate every day even without confession. I except Tuesday only, if it is not a feast day, a day during a novena, or the feast of some patron.

As for penances, the use of the discipline will be sufficient; and I desire that you positively omit the little chains or the *cilicium*, since you have to move about and work so much: we shall speak of this later on when God inspires me.

Do you not thank God that the Abbess has delivered you from going to the parlor and to the door?

I entreat you to have a little more confidence in Jesus Christ, who died for you that you might be a saint. I assure you that he means well, indeed very well, in regard to your welfare.

Father Savastano is at Rome, where he has been asked

to give a retreat in a convent. Please give him my kindest regards.

I bless you; recommend me to Jesus Christ. Write to me without delay, and inform me that you communicate as I have prescribed to you; for Communion is the most powerful help that you can have against storms when they come over you. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 576.

To his Brother, Don Ercole de Liguori.

He exhorts him to have patience.

April 5, 1768.

I sympathize with you in your trouble after the sad accident that has befallen Donna Marianna,[1] and I daily pray to God to grant you patience.

You should accept this cross and carry it cheerfully, since it comes from God's hand; otherwise it will become heavier, and you will nevertheless have to carry it. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xlvii.

[1] Donna Marianna Capano Orsini, wife of Don Ercole, had lost her mind through scruples.

LETTER 577.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He re-assures her in her fears.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 8, 1768.

God be praised that, after so many letters, you have finally consoled me by informing me, that you have obeyed me in regard to Communion!

Continue, I entreat you, and do not fear. It matters not that you know neither devotion nor prayer, on account of the employments in which you are engaged. All goes well; or is it of your own accord that you devote yourself to these occupations? You are doing so out of obedience, and it is this that God wishes at present. That is enough; when you are able to snatch a moment from your occupations, give it to God, and all will be well.

I do not yet permit you to use a straw-mattress; I will allow you to do so later on, when it is time.

As you must now work, substitute on Saturdays for the half-ounce of chocolate and the oil-cake, bread with vegetable-soup, if there is any, or milk-soup; and obey the Abbess when she forbids you to fast.

I do not wish you to say again that you are in a bad state; it is my business, and not yours, to judge in this matter.

It would be a very difficult undertaking for me at present to go to Naples.

Write to me, and I will answer you briefly; on your part restrict yourself to exposing in a few words your doubts, and the points about which you ask advice, and do not always repeat the same old song: *I know no longer any*

devotion; I know God no longer; I am in a very bad state, etc. Such words I must hear no more.

I assure you that you are on the right road; receive holy Communion, and go on as usual; God will strengthen you.

Pray to Jesus Christ for me. I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 578.

To Prince della Riccia.

He excuses himself for not being able to comply with his request.

April 16, 1768.

I have received the letter which you did me the honor to write to me in favor of the priest N. You know how much I esteem your commands; but I also know, how great is your prudence.

I would then say to you, that this priest has so far left much to be desired. But in order not to grow tedious, I will not enter into particulars.

He came personally, on two occasions, to beg me to admit him to the *concursus* [competitive examination]; but I told him, that I did not believe him to be competent to discharge the pastoral office, and that he should, therefore, have patience for the present. I moreover added, that when he would be older (for he is still very young) and would give proofs of steadfastness, I would not fail to promote him.

Please accept the expression of profound respect and

of perfect devotion with which I have the honor to be . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 579.

To the Same.

He respectfully declines one of his recommendations.

[The year 1768?]

The extreme kindness, with which you have seconded my episcopal ministry, has long since made me your debtor; but you will pardon me if I say that I cannot this time comply with your request to confer Orders upon your friend.

Some persons use every means to reach holy Orders, which they would receive to the injury of their souls; and this I cannot permit. *Neither do I count my life more precious than myself, so that I may consummate my course and the ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus Christ.*[1]

After an old copy.[2]

[1] "Nec facio animam meam pretiosiorem quam me, dummodo consummem cursum meum, et ministerium verbi, quod accepi a Domino Jesu."—*Acts*, xx. 24.

[2] The prince was by no means offended by this refusal, and he addressed to St. Alphonsus the following answer:

"The answer of your Lordship to the request which I made to you in regard to the ordination of N., my vassal, has furnished me with a very consoling proof of the truly apostolic force with which you are animated. This refusal has, I assure you, greatly edified me, and I promise you, never more to hurt the delicacy of your conscience by similar requests. Be kind enough to remember me in your prayers, and believe me, your most humble servant, etc."

LETTER 580.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He gives her a rule for the spiritual exercises.—Different exhortations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 11, 1768.

I gladly approve your exercises, and I bless them; but I do not wish so much application. Be satisfied with two hours of prayer divided into four parts. Here is the order that you may follow:

In the morning, half an hour's meditation with the Community; then half an hour's spiritual reading. Afterwards holy Communion. After Communion try to devote an hour to thanksgiving, either in the choir, or in your cell, but better in the choir, if there be several Masses that you can hear. During this hour read from time to time the affections that you find scattered through my books or those of others. Before dinner, if you have time, make another half-hour's spiritual reading; but between these exercises take a little relaxation; especially, when you feel mentally fatigued, should you omit some exercise. During the day you will also make another half-hour's spiritual reading with a half-hour's meditation; and then, after giving your head a little rest, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. After that follows a half-hour's relaxation in the garden or in another solitary place; and finally, before supper make a half-hour's meditation.

For goodness' sake, do not fail to communicate every day; and as for scruples, be guided by what I have written to you in my letters.

It is not true that you are in a bad way; you are going on well; and for this thank God. The Lord does not wish

that you should know your state; but I know it. Want of confidence may ruin you.

Father Pisanelli is in Rome at present, making the Visitation, but if you can have him, I will be satisfied. Do all you can with the Cardinal to have him after his return. He is liberal; but that matters not, for I do not wish you to deviate from any of the rules laid down by Father Savastano.

As for your retiring to the Hermitage [of Sister Orsola Benincasa], it is a temptation to think of it now; all the circumstances would have to be changed. It would be foolish to think of it under the present archbishop.

When you feel unwell, I wish you to consult the doctor and to obey him.

During these exercises recommend me in a special manner to Jesus Christ. Also every day, in all your prayers, Communions and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, pray for the Holy Church which is so violently attacked at the present time. All I wish you to do is to pray for the welfare of the Church. I dare not say much about this matter.

Notwithstanding your unworthiness, God loves you very much, you may be sure; you may believe me, for you know very well that I do not wish to deceive you.

Be faithful in communicating every day, and as for confession, it will be sufficient for you to confess once a year. I do not say as much, believe me, to all my penitents.

I bless you.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 581.

To Father Domenico de Sanctis, at Iliceto.

Line of conduct which the Fathers should follow in the dispute that was raised between the Community of Iliceto and a powerful adversary of the Congregation.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 1, 1768.

When answering your letter last week, I said to you that I felt a great desire to make peace with Maffei. And the same thing I tell you now; but it is not well for your Reverence ostensibly to negotiate peace with the Canon to the great displeasure of the inhabitants of the town.

It is improper, and it will never be proper, that we should become in any way the accusers of Maffei, as the people wish us to be; but it is no less improper that we should embrace his cause under the circumstances in which the assistance of the people, in my opinion, is more necessary to us than that of Maffei, since the municipality is opposed to us only because Maffei availed himself of the authority of the Council. Indeed, it is the municipality that is directly opposed to our house, Maffei keeping himself in the background; yet as this municipality is not at present in the hands of Maffei, he is no longer authorized to use its name.

[1] This adversary was Antonio Maffei, agent of the Prince of Castellaneta, Lord of Iliceto. He treated the people of the village harshly, and they were incensed at this treatment. He had then to struggle against violent opposition, and in order to gain over to his side the Fathers whom he had caused so much trouble during so many years (see Letter 283 of preceding volume, page 478), he engaged the services of Canon Maffei, his uncle. The Fathers at Iliceto then found themselves in a very awkward position, and so this letter of St. Alphonsus came in good time to point out to them what course they had to pursue.

To conclude. Tell the Rector and all the Fathers that it is not proper for us to bring accusations against Maffei. Peace has been made on our part; but on the other hand, we should do nothing that could displease the municipality.

Let us be the friends of all, let us speak well of all, and Jesus Christ will come to our aid. Such is the rule that is followed by those who have at heart the interests of Jesus Christ; they must adopt a manner different from that in which the affairs of the world are managed.

I bless your Reverence and your Community,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of the house at Pagani.

LETTER 582.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He speaks to him about the affairs at Iliceto and gives him news about his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 1, 1768.

I have received your answer in regard to my resignation of the episcopate.

As regards the affair at Iliceto, Father Tannoia is right; for Maffei has no longer the Council in his hands, as he had formerly, and the peace that we have made with him has done us but little good. Maffei can hurt us, but he cannot be of any use to us. Hence if it is not proper for us to take any positive measures against him, we should, on the other hand, guard against giving any offence to the people; for they can be useful to us in the case that is pending, since, to tell the truth, we have now to treat only with the municipality.

This is, therefore, the rule that must be followed, and is

to be recommended to the Fathers at Iliceto; let us then leave the rest to God, and under circumstances so dangerous, let us take no step without a real necessity — the necessity arising only, when we must defend ourselves; but let us never take part against Maffei, or against any other man.

I continue to feel internal pains, which cause me extreme suffering, and this pain appears to settle on the hip joint. But God wishes this; may his holy name be always blessed! It will be difficult for me to make my pastoral Visitations this year.

Please let me know what remedy Father Lorenzo d'Antonio uses for his sciatica. Here vesicatories and cauteries are spoken of. Ask Father Lorenzo and communicate to me his opinion.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 583.

To the Same.

The same subject.—He does not wish any one to accept the part of mediator.

[June, 1768.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

The mediation of which you speak will surely alienate from us the people of the town, without conciliating Maffei. The latter is a furious lion, and it will be impossible to pacify him.

What Father Fiocchi might say in favor of Maffei will be of little avail; for the latter will believe, that we speak thus to win his friendship, not because he is right.

On the other hand, everything makes me believe that, in

whatever way one may turn in the matter, right will always be found on the side of the people. So that it will be difficult for Father Fiocchi to say anything in favor of Maffei, without wounding his conscience and acting against justice. The inhabitants would always say, that to favor our own interests, we sought to ruin theirs.

This mediation will then have only one result, either to draw upon us the hostility of the inhabitants (which would be no small injury), or to increase the hatred with which Maffei is animated against us. Maffei will, indeed, say that all that is alleged by Father Fiocchi in favor of the inhabitants, is dictated by him through a spirit of revenge; and what Father Fiocchi might say in favor of the other party, will only draw upon us the hatred of the people without conciliating Maffei.

I am decidedly of opinion that no member of the Congregation should accept the part of mediator.

The reasons which I have just set forth may be stated to the President; I think that they will suffice to convince any one.

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xlix.

LETTER 584.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli.

He requests him to render a service.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 8, 1768.

Read the enclosed letter which your penitent[1] has written to me from Lauro. She needs your counsel, and there is no other remedy; you must go to see her.

She will, I think, send you a conveyance; hence I

[1] Sister Maria Illuminata Garzillo.

beg you to go at once to console her, for the case is urgent.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 585.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He sends her one of his works, and exhorts her to communicate frequently.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 18, 1768.

I send you the "Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ," a little work that I desired to publish a long time ago, and that, with God's help, has at last made its appearance.

On this occasion I desire to be informed of your state. I beg you to write me freely and without constraint whether you have taken another guide.

Do not, for pity's sake, think that you will displease me by saying that you have found another director. Be assured, on the contrary, that I shall be pleased; for, to speak sincerely, I feel some reluctance in answering you, not being at times able to do so in so few words as I would desire, especially now that I have been sick in bed for a week, with blisters on my thigh on account of the pain caused me by a kind of sciatica.

Inform me, then, whether you have taken another director, or whether you are continuing to follow the rules of Father Savastano, from which I wish you never to depart; for this is also a means of making good progress. But you must especially obey him in regard to Communion, because if you omit Communion against obedience,

you will make no progress, as I have told you several times.

What I fear, is, that in so often omitting Communion against obedience, as you have done for whole months with me, and thus remaining on the one hand deprived of help, and on the other incessantly tormented by scruples, temptations, and desolations, you may end in giving up everything, and in losing all that you have gained, or rather all that Jesus Christ has done to place you on the road of perfection.

Your state requires exact and blind obedience; but you fail much in this obedience by listening to the devil, who inspires you with so many fears and with so much mistrust.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, that he may give me patience and resignation in all the ills that I must suffer; it is this, not health, that I desire.

In the book that I send you, read the last chapter, which treats especially of temptations and desolations; but read first the article on desolations.

If you can do so easily, show this work to some other religious: it is good for every one, but especially for religious; and at Naples it has been highly commended.

For myself, I care very little for commendations; my desire is, that Jesus Christ may be loved, above all at the present time, in which at Naples he seems to be entirely unknown. If, however, others do not wish to love him, let us at least not refuse him our love. I remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 586.

To the Same.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 25, 1768.

God be praised that I have at last received from you a letter in which you tell me that you have approached holy Communion. All your bad dreams, the spirit of blasphemy, mistrust, and the thought that there is no Providence for you, give me no concern. Be obedient, and all will go well.

I think that you have by this time received my book on the "Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ."

Read in the last chapter of this work what St. Jane Frances de Chantal suffered during forty-one years. She was a prey to so violent a desolation that it seemed to her that she was on the point of turning her back upon God and giving up everything.

You are not the only one whom Jesus Christ treats thus: how many penitents have I not had whom the Lord has treated in this way nearly to the day of their death! One of them was continually tempted to hate God; another said without intermission that she had been condemned never to be able to love God, etc.; nevertheless they all died a happy death.

And as for you, of what are you afraid? If you had not this cross of desolation, you would not have any cross in this world; and without a cross we cannot come to God.

Besides, the pain that you feel on account of not being able to love God, is a proof that you love him; for if you did not love him you would not feel this pain. Those persons that do not love God feel no pain in thinking that they do not love him.

Tell me, if it were proposed to you to make you Queen of Naples and of the entire world, and if there were, besides, promised you all the delights of Paradise on condition that you should not love God, would you consent?

Abandon yourself entirely and always to the arms of the divine mercy, never neglect prayer, and do not ask to feel in yourself the love of God. I fear that you have too restless a desire to feel it; but God does not wish that you should feel it; he wishes you to love him without feeling it.

As for the penances, there should not be any question about them till the Abbess gives her consent, especially during the present hot weather. We shall speak of these things when you are quite well.

I am still confined to bed with blisters without being able to say Mass, and I am satisfied; because God wishes it so; and this has been going on for two weeks.

Pray to Jesus Christ to give me perfect conformity to his will, and pray also for the Church.

It is a misery to see how disorders increase day by day, and there seems to be no human means that can furnish a remedy. We must therefore pray. Do this several times a day, especially after Communion and when you make your visit. I remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 587.

To Father Andrea Villani.

The saint's resignation in his illness.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 29, 1768.

As to my illness, after so many remedies I am still in the same condition, and I suffer from sciatica more than before, so that the doctors scarcely know what to do. Hence I have resolved to leave all in God's hands, and to bear my pain as long as it pleases him. In a few days I shall go to St. Agata, as well as to Durazzano, to make the Visitation.

Peace is concluded with Maffei, so it appears; yet I do not know how it can last. But it is my opinion that, during times so perilous, we must be satisfied with any kind of agreement.

I learn that Brother Francesco [Tartaglione] has again quitted Naples. *Fiat voluntas tua!* [Thy will be done!] Tell me whether he has continual fever, and what the doctors say of his case.

I bless you and all your subjects,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 588.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Utility of contradictions.

[ARIENZO, July, 1768.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Thanks be to God! I am to-day without fever after

having been in bed during nineteen days with catarrh of the chest.

As to yourself, go on as best you can. Do not deviate from the rules laid down for you by Father Savastano; continue also to write to this Father, as it is not forbidden to you to do so. Have recourse to the ministry of the ordinary confessor for absolution, and when you can, confer with Mgr. Testa or Father Chiesa; it is my will that you should do so.

If you have no longer in your neighborhood the Blessed Sacrament in the old church of the *Gesù*,[1] you have it in your church and also in that of San Giovanni Maggiore, which is not far off.

The soldiers are attentive to their duties; you have then nothing to fear. Much less should you be afraid of the nuns who oppose you; for they thus help you to unite yourself more closely to God.

If that convulsive cough has not ceased, the time has not yet come for you to resume your penances; as long as it lasts you should even lay aside the discipline. For the present it is enough for you to take the interior discipline of your desolations, in regard to which read one of my letters, not to find therein consolation, but to summon up courage.

Without a struggle, there will be no victory; and without victory, there will be no crown.

The joy of the saints consists in contempt, contradictions, aridities, disgust even for the most holy things.

Never omit holy Communion, and be without fear. After the night comes the day. But the only day that we should desire in this life is that in which we shall see God face to face, and shall love him forever.

[1] The church that belonged to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, and that was probably closed after their expulsion.

Pray to Jesus Christ for me; a log of wood is not more immovable than I am in my bed.

Repeat without ceasing the words: *My dear despised Jesus, how sweet it is to suffer for Thee!*

When you write to Father Savastano, salute him kindly for me.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 589.

To the Same.

He re-assures her in her fears, and exacts from her obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 17, 1768.

That letter to Canon S. Biase I should not have had sent to you; but now that it has happened there is no remedy. Lay aside, therefore, every scruple that you have acted against obedience; go to Communion, and think no more about the matter.

It is useless to write to Mgr. Testa; I have already written twice, but unsuccessfully.

It may be possible that I shall have to go to Naples to give the retreat to the clergy; but this will not be before November.

In the mean time, you say that you do not know in what state your soul is before God. You do not know this, and God wishes that you should not know it; but I assure you that you are in the state of grace. If you do not believe me, it is a sign that you have little faith in obedience.

This is the reason why I tell you that in the state of the purgative life in which Jesus Christ wishes you to be at present, you should continue to make your meditation, your spiritual reading, and other spiritual exercises that you can perform, but without seeking interior peace or consolation in any of these exercises; it suffices that you perform them in order to accomplish the will of God, which is found in obedience, especially in regard to Communion.

You write to me that you do not know what to do; well! see what you have to do: Communicate every day, as I have several times told you; and when you write to me, inform me whether you have done so, or have omitted Communion sometimes; for you have often failed in obedience on this point. This has made me fear for your perseverance, and has several times induced me to write to you that I should abandon you, if you continued to disobey me in reference to Communion. I repeat, if you continue to fail in this respect, I will no more answer you.

I thank you for the sweetmeats that you have sent me, though you know that I can take but little of them; but if you continue to abstain from Communion, I shall give you up, even if you sent me your whole monastery in the form of sweetmeats.

I say this, because your letter does not contain a word about Communion; this makes me fear that you have committed some fault in this respect. I repeat, if at first sight you are not certain that you are in mortal sin, always communicate. Do you understand? I will have no excuses. It is from Communion that I expect your perseverance and all progress in virtue.

I have remarked with great pleasure the good work that you have done in taking that old person to your room; and I assure you that Jesus Christ has been greatly pleased with this little act that you have performed for him. Con-

tinue to exercise the same charity, as long as the obedience due to the Abbess permits you to do so.

Read also the note which the pupils have written to me, and continue to render them services whenever you can. These little things are most agreeable to the Heart of Jesus Christ.

My leg is better. Do not cease to recommend me to Jesus Christ, not that I may be cured, but that he may let me do his will.

Read especially, in my last work, chapters vi. and xii.[1]

I bless you. Do not cease to pray for the Church.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 590.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Obedience of the saint.—His confidence in regard to the affairs of his Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO July 18, 1768.

I have received your letter in which, among other things, I read the following: "As for the novena of the Blessed Virgin, accept it if you have been asked; for in that case you have a just reason to decline giving the ecclesiastical retreat; but to send now an absolute refusal on this latter point does not appear to me to be proper."

As regards the novena, I must, they tell me, no longer expect that the Cardinal will send me a request. It was a

[1] Here the saint means the "Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ." The title of chapter vi., is: *He that loves Jesus Christ, loves only what Jesus Christ loves.*—Chapter xii., is entitled: *He that loves Jesus Christ, hopes for all things from him.*

cleric, it appears, who asked for me; and it is believed that he had been urging the Cardinal; but so far no request has been made, nor will it be made.

If, however, a request comes from the Cardinal, I will go as you wish me to do; but, tell me, whether you wish me to accept, in case the request be made by some priests or clerics, who wish to hear me; for then some will desire to have me, but the greater part will be of the opposite opinion, so as not to hear the same preacher two years in succession.[1]

In reference to the retreat, I have followed your counsel, and I have written to the Superior[2] a long letter, in which I exposed to him all my infirmities and the proximate danger in which I am of falling dangerously ill by preaching at this time. I even begged him to look about for another preacher to replace me, as it would very likely happen, that I would become sick during the exercises, not so much on account of the sermons, as on account of the dampness to which my going out would expose me. I however added, and this to obey you (as otherwise I would have answered in a different manner), I added, I say: If, notwithstanding all this, you wish me to come and to take the risk, I will go in order to obey.

The letter having now been sent, I do not know, how I can conveniently free myself; but I know for certain, that all my infirmities and dangers which I have represented, will have no effect, for Don Felice [Verzella, my secretary] who has already spoken of all this to the Superior and to Canon Sparano, received as an answer these words: "No matter, no matter; the Lord will help him."

I will then receive without doubt another letter announcing to me, that I am expected. Please say to me

[1] Reference is here made to the novena of the Assumption. The saint had given it the year preceding in the church of S. Restituta.

[2] The Superior of the Congregation of Apostolic Missions.

plainly what you wish me to answer, when the letter arrives.

As to the affairs at Rome, I will do all that I can, when the time comes.

Many things are said about the Jesuits, but there is nothing certain. The General will be kept in sight rather to preserve him from insult, than from preventing him from taking flight. It is said, that the Society has been driven from Germany; but this rumor lacks confirmation.

In regard to our affairs, it is well to abandon ourselves entirely to the hands of God; but I do not conceive the extreme fear with which you are seized, since our houses of the kingdom are all established by a decree of his Catholic Majesty. As to Maffei's accusations, they are regarded as absurdities; the more so, since Benevento being now in the power of the king,[1] the jealousy that might be conceived against us from that quarter, can no longer have any reason to exist.

All that we may fear is to see the house at Benevento dissolved, but no other.[2]

As to our house in Sicily, we know that in case we are forced by the Fathers of the Pious Schools to leave it, we still have the house of the *library*[3] which will not be wanting to us. The revenues and the funds for the support of the librarians have not yet been settled, but will

1 In response to the Brief of Clement XIII. (January 30, 1768), declaring null and void the Pragmatic sacrilege of the Duke of Parma, the Neapolitan troops occupied the State of Benevento (June 1768).

2 This house belonged to the Pontifical States at the time of its foundation. It was, therefore, the only one that had not been approved, or rather tolerated by the King of Naples.

3 "At Girgenti we also had the use of the rich library of Cento, valued at more than one hundred thousand ducats (425,000 frs.) with an annual salary for the librarian." (*Tannoia*, "Life of St. Alphonsus," bk. iii. chap. xliii.)

soon be arranged. But the house, as far as I have learnt through another circumstance, has already been assigned to us.

This library has been to us a true God-send, since it makes it certain, that we shall not be driven from Girgenti.

However, in regard to the affairs at Rome, I repeat what I have said: when the time comes, I will do all that I can do.

I bless you and all your subjects,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] When you go to Benevento, I expect to see you here, either when you go there or when you return.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 591.

To Don Salvatore Romano,[1] Syndic of Arienzo.

Zeal of the saint against scandals.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 18, 1768.

Many days have elapsed, my dear Salvatore, and nothing has been settled about the house in question, and the soldiers continue to act worse than ever.

[1] D. Salvatore Romano was one of the witnesses in the process of beatification of the saint, and he thus deposed: "The first time that I met the servant of God was at Naples, and under the following circumstances: I was at that time boarding at the Chinese College, whither Don Alfonso came from time to time to preach a triduum and also to address the pupils. He would then remain for some time in the house. It was on a similar occasion that I heard him preach, I believe that I also went to confession to him. This happened in 1754. The second time I saw him was at Sant' Agata de' Goti, where I went to pay him a visit in company with Mgr. Puoti, Canon Puoti, and other gentlemen of the city of Arienzo,

Please think of this: it is you who will have to render an account to God for all the sins that are committed. How can we pray to obtain rain, if we allow sins to multiply?

I beg you to come to me at once, in order to see what measures we should take.

I give you my pastoral blessing, and I have the honor to be,

Your very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved at San Felice a Cancello, near Naples, in the chapel of the family of the noble Signor D. Alfonso Capobianco.

LETTER 592.

To the Priest Don Salvatore Tramontano, at Naples.

Resignation of the saint in his infirmities.

ARIENZO, August 18, 1768.

. . . . . Six days have now elapsed, during which I have not said Mass; a blister has been applied to my leg. If God wishes, I am willing to remain in this state till the end of my life.

after he had come to his diocese. The third time it was also at Arienzo, whither he had come to fix his abode on account of his infirmities and by order of the doctors. I went to meet him as far as Zicola, a hamlet of Durrazzano. I had then several interviews with him, either on personal matters, or as syndic of the municipality, and as administrator of the church of Ave Gratia Plena and of the convent of the Rocchettine nuns [canonesses regular of St. Augustine]. The conversations that I had with him treated of the things of God, of the means of removing scandal, of the assistance to be given to the poor." (*Process . . . Summary* n. 5, *Witness* xii.)

Pray to God that he may make my will entirely conformable to his own.[1]

Tonnoia, Book iii. Chapter xlii.

LETTER 593.

To Tollo Iadavia, Tenant of the Episcopal Lands at Bagnoli.

Generosity of the saint.

ARIENZO, August 22, 1768.

We release Tollo Iadavia, tenant of our farm, from the payment of the sum of one hundred and three ducats and twenty grains,[2] being the arrears of rent due since our possession of it till the month of August of this year.

In testimony of which . . .

ARIENZO, from our episcopal palace, August 22, 1768.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] On August 12, 1768, St. Alphonsus was attacked with a grave malady, which bent his head to his breast for the rest of his life, and which deprived him during an entire year of the happiness of offering the holy Sacrifice. It is known with what resignation the servant of God bore his dreadful sufferings. In a letter written to Don Salvatore Tramontano, he thus expresses himself: "I am still continuing to carry the cross of my infirmity. It will be two weeks to-morrow since I have kept my bed and have not said Mass; and there is no improvement in my condition. My stomach has nearly ceased to work; but I am satisfied, because God wishes me to be so."

[2] 483.60 frs.

LETTER 594.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Various recommendations.

[ARIENZO, end of August, 1768.]

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Now that I am able to write, I answer your letter. These past days I have been very ill, have received the Viaticum several times, and one day I was at the point of death. At present I am a little better, and am without fever and out of bed; but I must remain day and night sitting in my chair in the midst of continual pain.

I tell you this that you may be induced to pray every day to Jesus Christ to grant me the grace to offer him my illness as I should. I desire nothing else.

Obey the Abbess in everything, and do not pay any attention to the thought that she will hinder you from living in solitude. It is Jesus Christ that wishes this; obey, then, cheerfully; cease to lament your state of aridity; it suffices that you do the will of God.

I was consoled when I heard that you are continuing your Communions; now I think that you have entered upon the right road. Continue thus, and you will surely sanctify yourself.

Banish mistrust. For myself I do not see whence this mistrust comes. Mistrust yourself; that is necessary: but in regard to God, I do not see what motive you can have to mistrust him after the many proofs of love that he has shown you. You do him an injury in exhibiting so little confidence.

The rule that you follow for your confessions is good.

As for penances, you may, after you have recovered, use the simple discipline every day, and the discipline unto blood, every twenty days. Omit the little chains for the

present, since obedience imposes upon you so many fatiguing occupations. On Saturdays be satisfied with bread and one soup; and if this is not sufficient, take two.

I am most willing to permit you to omit some particular devotion, so as to devote your care to the young persons whom I have recommended to you, especially to your niece, who as such has a greater claim upon your charity, the more so as she has good dispositions. Although she is not under your care, yet you will not fail to find from time to time an opportunity to suggest to her some virtuous sentiment, an act of love towards Jesus Christ, the desire to sanctify herself, etc. No one can prevent you from doing that.

As for the messages from your relatives, listen to them as you listen to the bells of S. Chiara. Yes, answer them that they should pray to God for you, as you pray for them; then go on as usual.

You should not ask the Cardinal to send you Mgr. Testa. The Cardinal might again think that you wish to resume your project of entering the Hermitage. Request Mgr. Testa to pay you a visit, and if he refuses, there will be an end of it.

Confined to my chair, I also pray for you; and you must not forget to obtain for me perfect resignation. May Jesus possess your whole heart! Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 595.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He makes known to him his state of health.

ARIENZO, October 8, 1768.

. . . . . As for my pains, they are always the same. I am obliged to walk on crutches and to be supported by two men. These past six days, I have been able to move in this way; but I see that I am getting no better than when I went out in a carriage.

The nights are to me nearly like the days. Nature suffers; but it seems to me that my will is resigned to God's will. Recommend me in your Mass, so that I may obtain perfect resignation.

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xliii.

LETTER 596.

To the Same.

He asks for a work which he wishes to refute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 11, 1768.

I have been impatiently expecting Spirito's[1] book. Be so kind as to send it to me at once through Father Cimino,

[1] This is probably a work of Don Salvatore Spirito, perhaps that bearing the title: "Dialogue of the Dead, or Ecclesiastico-political Triduum, Establishing the respective Rights of the Civil Power and of the Priesthood." This dialogue was an answer to a book of Father Tommaso Mamachi, a Dominican, entitled: "The Free Right which the Church has to Acquire and to Possess Temporal Goods." St. Alphonsus wished to have this work of Spirito in order to refute it. "A Neapolitan author," says Tannoia, "having attacked in various points the authority of the Church, and especially ecclesiastical privileges, Alphonsus, feeling his mind free, notwithstanding his sufferings, resolved to combat this work. He wrote to Father Villani, October 11, 'I am impatiently expecting

and send it to me *without delay* by way of Naples. I say *without delay;* but God knows how much time will elapse before it arrives by way of Naples, considering the round that it must make. It is for this reason that I have asked you several times to send it to me with the provisions bought in the market.

By this time, I hope, you have heard about the troublesome affair regarding the novice. Tell me what I shall do; I will follow your suggestions.

As I have written to you, my pains continue and my state is always the same. *Fiat voluntas tua!* [Thy will be done!]

I embrace and bless you all, especially Father Mazzini. Tell him that I am most thankful to Don Francesco de Vicariis[1] for his presents; they are first class.

You are right; it will be impossible for me to go to Nocera this winter.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

N.'s work;' and in another letter he says: 'If you have anything good in regard to personal immunity, send it to me also; and if you find in the book, which I have sent you, any notes which I have written while reading the book, return them to me with the rest.'" (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. xlii.)

[1] He was a man who led a very holy life; he was a great benefactor of our Congregation and even resided with our Fathers in our house at Pagani (Nocera).

LETTER 597.

To the Prince della Riccia.

Prudence and justice of the saint in the repression of scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 11, 1768.

I have the honor to make known to your Excellency the following facts. The priest N. was admonished by the Rural Dean for having played a part in a profane comedy. He was forbidden in my name ever to do so again, and was ordered to present himself to the Vicar-General to receive a punishment for his fault.

Notwithstanding the admonition, he continued to do the same thing; and he appeared on the stage three or four other times and played, they tell me, a part that was not proper.

The spectacle of a priest appearing on the stage in the evening, and on the altar in the morning, is deserving of severe reprehension.

But, as I hear that the comedy was played in the palace of your Excellency, I desire, out of respect for your person, to inform you of the facts, before I proceed against the culprit. Your piety, I am sure, will not leave unpunished the act of a priest, who lowers his character to such a degree, and who esteems so little the commands of his Superior.

Your Excellency will please pardon my continual importunities, and accept the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 598.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Various exhortations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 19, 1768.

My health is better, having recovered from a mortal illness; but I am weak and full of pain, so that I cannot make any movement, nor close an eye during night. This condition has continued for the past three months. May God be always blessed for having sent me this little present!

Let us come to what concerns you. The freaks in which you indulge, make me tremble for you. Thank God that you have found a good Superior; without her you would have already frequented the parlor, and would have become like the rest.

You wish to sanctify yourself, and do you not wish to be contradicted, and do you desire always to enjoy at the same time interior consolations?

For mercy's sake, do not yield in the least to an excessive affection for your relatives; for such a thing might be fatal to you and ruin you entirely. You should, above all, be grateful to God, who has proved his love for you by so many special graces.

In regard to the penances, my intention is to allow you to resume them; but I must know beforehand what is the state of your health.

Do not omit Communion, and recommend me to Jesus Christ in order that he may give me resignation in my illness.

I could not help laughing when I read the words at the close of your letter: "Let me know whether you will come

in November."[1] I repeat, I have been disabled from head to foot these past three months, and surely I shall remain so during the whole of winter—perhaps even during my whole life. But I say again, I thank the Lord for this; I do not desire to be well; only pray that God may give me the grace to be resigned.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA.
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 599.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Girgenti.

He exhorts him to have confidence in God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 6, 1768.

I have received your letter[2] containing such terrible news. But I am wrong to use the word *terrible*, for whatever God permits, is not terrible. The Lord wishes to mortify us; may he always be praised!

I have already written to you on the subject of the letters that I have addressed to Palermo, to the members of the Junta. At Naples everything possible will be done according to the advice of the jurists; for now the times are stormy.

What I ask you above all, is, that you should not lose confidence in Jesus Christ.

[1] See Letter 589, page 297.

[2] "In October, 1768, Mgr. Lucchesi having died intestate, the Prince of Campo-Franco declared himself his heir, and pretended that the annual hundred ounces [1304 frs.] which the deceased bishop had assigned to our Fathers for the work of the missions and for their maintenance, had not been validly given."—*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. xliii.

If our enemies finally succeed in driving you out of the house, try to rent another that may suffice to give you shelter. We should not abandon so quickly our rights, but persist until God makes known to us that he does not wish us to be any longer in Girgenti. We shall give fewer missions; but you will always have a little bread to eat.

We shall wait to see what the deputies, what the new bishop will do, and above all, what God will decide.

I am persuaded that God does not wish the ruin of this house; and after the present squall, who knows what the Lord will do? Let us now think of giving ourselves more and more to prayer, and leave all to God, being satisfied with whatever he may dispose.

I still continue to be a cripple from head to foot; but I am satisfied, and I bless God, and thank him for granting me peace and resignation.

I lately wrote a long letter to Mgr. Targianni, who lives at Naples and who loves me. I have begged him to undeceive his brother at Palermo[1] in regard to the alleged laxity of my Moral Theology.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

1 Diodato Targianni, royal counsellor at Palermo, had allowed himself to be deceived by a Jansenist theologian, and believed that St. Alphonsus was teaching lax Moral Theology.

LETTER 600.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to take the advice of the Mother Abbess.—Spiritual counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 12, 1768.

I thank you for the exquisite sweetmeats that you have sent me. They are of use to me when in my illness I take half a cup of chocolate. I am very much obliged to you.

As regards your spiritual guide, I thank the Lord with my whole soul, and you should thank him more than I, that he has enabled you to find, without going outside of the monastery, the best and the most useful of all your directors in the person of your Abbess, who, from what I see, directs you with so much prudence, that I could not direct you better. Please give her my regards, and tell her that I recommend myself to her prayers, so that she may obtain for me resignation in the sickness that afflicts me, and that continues the same; on my part, quite miserable though I am, I also recommend her to Jesus Christ.

As for you, I say nothing else than that you should follow in everything the advice of the Abbess, both for your interior and exterior; and I add, that even after she has given up her charge, you will do well to remain under her direction. I presume that it is also the advice that will be given to you by Father Savastano, to whom I wish you to give my kindest regards.

In reference to your meditation, first read a little, and then make a determined number of acts and of prayers; for example: fifty acts of love, fifty offerings of yourself, fifty prayers to obtain perfect love and holy conformity to the will of God; and it matters little whether you perform them

without sensible devotion. Address also acts of love and prayers to the Blessed Virgin.

Do not ask for the consolations that you formerly experienced; you are now more pleasing to God than you were then. And do not, I beg you, speak of your want of confidence: we have a God who is all-powerful, and who has the will to sanctify us; what have you to fear?

May Jesus and Mary be our love and our hope! I bless you, and remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 601.

To the Same.

He gently reproves her for her little confidence in God.

[November 18, 1768?]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

I must thank you again for the grand sweetmeats and the excellent biscuits which you have presented to me. They have been prepared in an exquisite manner; but I should prefer to have them plainer, without the intermixture of sugar; for, as I am confined to my bed, this abundance of sugar is hurtful to my stomach. But enough of this; again I thank you.

Let us now speak about our affairs. You did well to go Communion through obedience to the Mother Abbess; but you did wrong by not going to Communion on the other days.

I am glad to hear that you have become an heresiarch. The confessor has not forbidden you to receive Communion; why then do you omit it? The confessor simply wished to find fault with the little confidence that you have

in our Lord and with the excessive fear which makes you regard the Lord as if he were a tyrant. How often have I myself not reproached you with this want of confidence?

For pity's sake, for pity's sake, trust in a God who has given his life to save you, and who wishes the salvation of the worst and most obstinate sinners. Why then do you so much fear him?

I have told you, and I repeat: Jesus Christ wishes you well, and indeed very well; it is he who wishes to keep you in the darkness in which you are. Be resigned; but for pity's sake, fulfil what I have told you and what Mother Abbess has told you, never, never omit a single Communion. Now you take a fancy not to communicate for many consecutive days, and it is this that can ruin you. If I do not inspire you with confidence, a thousand Monsignori Testa will not do so. You should, therefore, obey.

Let the bad behavior of the servants in your regard not trouble you interiorly; that is of no importance; you are made of flesh and blood, and not of stone. It suffices that you manifest nothing exteriorly, neither at present nor in the future.

As for myself, from the bed of sickness on which I am, I always recommend you especially to Jesus Christ after holy Communion.

Tell Sister Antonia[1] that Donna Marianna[2] is not possessed, but is out of her mind. God alone, who heals the insane, can remedy this evil. For pity's sake, let Antonia not send me hither Donna Marianna. This would be a new trouble to me who am sick, and am day and night a prey to continual pains.

Salute Sister Antonia for me. Never omit holy Com-

[1] Antonia de Liguori, cousin of the saint, and a nun in the convent of S. Marcellino.

[2] Donna Marianna Capano Orsini, wife of Don Ercole de Liguori.

munion, and recommend me to Jesus Christ that he may grant me resignation. The pains that I suffer could serve to make me a great saint; but I know so little how to profit by them. Pray then for me. I bless you and remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the noble family of Catanzaro.

LETTER 602.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He proposes a mission to him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 18, 1768.

I have been asked for two Fathers to give a mission at Laiano during Passion week; and the parish priest will give nine ducats besides the board.

In the misery in which we are, I would not refuse this proposal. I however leave all to you.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] The parish priest wants a speedy answer; for otherwise he will call for other missionaries. This is the reason why I have written to you immediately.[1] I will begin in a few days the milk-cure by taking a few ounces of nourishment in the morning, and five or six ounces of milk in the evening. May God bless this diet!

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The saint strongly insisted that this mission should be given; because three days after (November 21) he again wrote to Father Villani: "By the grace of God, I have regulated the missions for my

LETTER 603.

To Don Francesco di Filippo, Archpriest of Frasso.

He complains of the difficulties that the mission, to be given at Frasso, has to meet with.

ARIENZO, November 27, 1768.

I beg God to grant me patience in regard to the mission to be given at Frasso, for he has wished, up to the last day, to try me on account of it.

According to what you wrote me some time ago, you and my Rural Dean had found for the missionaries a house in which to lodge them, and you desired to know on what day the mission would open. I answered you that the Fathers would be ready by the 19th of the month. You then asked me to defer it for a while, as the seed-time was not yet over. In compliance with your just request, I consented to have the missions at Arpaia and Forchia given first and to finish with the mission at Frasso. The latter mission was to begin this evening, as I told you. However, on account of the bad weather I asked the Fathers to prolong till to-morrow evening the mission in the above-mentioned places, and then to go to you on Tuesday, and to open the mission on Wednesday. The Fathers will, therefore, give in the two places the closing benediction, and on Tuesday evening, without fail, they will be with you. I believed that you and the gentlemen were ready to receive the missionaries without any other intimation. I

whole diocese, and they have already begun in four quarters. A fifth still remains where there is no mission: it is the village of Laiano four or five miles from Sant' Agata. Its inhabitants are poor countrymen and simple people; I must, therefore, have two or three of our Fathers, at least two of them, to give this mission during the carnival, or at the latest during Lent; but I should prefer the carnival." (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. xlii.)

had also taken upon myself, as you know, the expenses incurred for the house and for the beds.

I now return to my subject: The Fathers will surely be with you on Tuesday; you should, therefore, see that the beds and the house of the missionaries are ready for that day. They will accommodate themselves to everything, as they are laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, and know how to sacrifice their own comforts.

I must, however, tell you: God preserve me from having with my other archpriests all the difficulties, all the annoyances, that I have had with you! I should not have the courage to send them missionaries. Thanks be to God, all the parish priests of the diocese accept with great eagerness the missions which they have so importunely asked for: Frasso alone has the sad privilege of making so many difficulties. It is without doubt the devil who wishes to oppose the good of souls.

I repeat: it matters little that the house which has been hired, is not spacious enough; the Fathers will know how to accommodate themselves.

As for the beds, I do not believe that those gentlemen at Frasso would wish to have it everywhere said that, thanks to them, the missionaries had to sleep on the floor. I repeat: if the beds are to be hired, I am ready to pay for them.

I bless you and remain . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 604.

To the Prince della Riccia.

He asks him to do a favor.

ARIENZO, December 9, 1768.

After having, with great difficulty, obtained the priests from the archdiocese of Naples to give a mission in your city of Airola, I have had numerous inquiries made to find a house where they might lodge; but nowhere could one be found, although money was offered in payment.

Now nothing else remains for me to do than to ask your Excellency to assign to the missionaries one story of your palace and to lodge them for ten days. This is the only way of securing for your vassals the fruits of the holy exercises.

Be therefore so kind as to render me this service. The Lord will reward you for it. While waiting for the honor of your commands, I sign myself with the most profound respect,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 605.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He thanks him for a service that has been rendered, and speaks to him about various affairs concerning the Congregation.

Live Jesus!

ARIENZO, December 8, 1768.

I told you that two or three Fathers would be needed for giving the little mission at Laiano, and you very obligingly answered me that you would send them. I should prefer that you send them during the carnival rather than in Lent. Tell me precisely, at what time, in what week, and on what day you can send them; I will then have the house and the necessary beds prepared.

Father Blasucci has, no doubt, written to you as he has written to me: he tells me that, thanks to the Vicar Capitular and to the Canon Cantor, the affair about the library[1] and the concession of land has been definitively concluded. He desired to have one more Mass. I told him to have an understanding with you.

He asked me for the power of preaching the Lenten sermons at Girgenti[2] where the Canons were anxious to have him. Under the circumstances I believed that I should grant him the dispensation from the Rule.

I bless you and all your subjects.

I have written to Signor Volpe about the paper that was lost, and he answered me in the letter that is enclosed.

Tell me what I should answer. I must at least give him something. I was thinking of having this arrangement made by Father Caione, when he goes to the mission at

[1] See Letter 590, page 299.

[2] The Rule of the Institute forbade the Fathers to preach Lenten sermons.

Montella. Please write to him and give him all the needed information.[1]

I have just received answers to my letters. One that is very kind, is from the Viceroy of Sicily. He tells me that so far not a word has been said about my Moral Theology, and he promises his protection, for, as he says, he has a good opinion of me. The Archdeacon of Monreale has also answered in the same way. All this noise is over, I hope, and I now think the moment has arrived to publish my *Apology*.[2]

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] Father Francesco Margotta (deceased August 11, 1764) had not directly bequeathed his property to the Congregation, as the latter could not legally acquire property. He bequeathed it to Fathers Caione and Ferrara. The last named founded with this inheritance and other property that belonged to him, a chaplaincy in favor of our Fathers. But after his death (August 22, 1767) one of his heirs, named Michele Volpe, came to know the particulars relative to this foundation through a paper that had been unfortunately lost. He at once claimed the restitution of the above-mentioned inheritance. (See further on, Letter 614, January 22, 1769.)

[2] That is, the little work that appeared some time afterwards under the title: "Apology for the Moral Theology, accused by some of Laxism, of defending a Lax Probabilistic System, and especially the Less Probable Opinion."

LETTER 606.

To Sister Clementina di Gesù, Franciscan Religious of the Reform of the Venerable Francesco Farnese at Palestrina.

He excuses himself for not being able to render a service which she had asked of him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 8, 1768.

I have received the letter in which you request me to celebrate Mass in honor of the Blessed Sacrament. You can by your prayers obtain for me the grace of fulfilling your desire, for it is four months now since the Lord has granted me this grace.[1] I have become a cripple from head

[1] The letter of the nun, which the saint answered, was as follows:

J. M. J.

Right Reverend Sir:

I have felt for a long time a great desire to offer to you an humble request; but reflecting on my unworthiness, I did not till to-day think, that I should yield to this desire. However, my Saviour in the Most Blessed Sacrament having, without ceasing, increased the strength of this desire, I could not help communicating it to Father Francesco Longobardi, our most worthy Visitor. He praised your goodness and encouraged me in my design, and, therefore, here is my humble mission which I lay at your feet.

The reading of your two works: "The True Spouse of Jesus Christ" and the "Visits to the Blessed Sacrament" furnish my poor soul with delicious food. These writings are for me, by the grace of God, the source of so many lights and graces, that the Lord, it seems to me, wishes to sanctify me through your ministry. Do not, therefore, refuse me, I beg you, the favor which I solicit for the love of Jesus and Mary, and, therefore, please to celebrate to my intention a votive Mass in honor of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Sacred Heart, in order to ask my merciful Saviour for the salvation of my soul and the souls of all my relatives. This grace, this signal favor, I have been earnestly desiring for several months, and I ask for it to-day. But I repeat: I expressly desire that the

to foot and am suffering from every kind of pain. Not only can I not say Mass, but I cannot even move.

For this I continually bless our Lord who makes me participate in his cross; and I regard this malady as a sign that God wishes to save my soul, and that he makes me expiate here below a part of my sins.

I will, however, not omit to recommend you to our Lord in the Communion which I receive every morning. He wishes to make you a saint; I see this by your letter; and he has deigned to give you his holy love; I will ask him to aid you to belong entirely to him.

My poor works have then contributed to nourish your fervor! I am glad to hear this. If I love the Lord but little, the thought that others love him much consoles me, and I will try to help them to do so.

I will, therefore, be mindful of praying for you in my Communions; but I expect from you the same service. Ask for me perfect resignation in this illness which by itself can make me a saint.

holy Mass be celebrated by your Lordship, just as our dear Lord has wished me to desire. If there is nothing in me that can merit such a favor, you will find me worthy of being heard in consideration of the love of Jesus Christ. I never forget you in the visits that I make to the Blessed Sacrament, and you have, and shall always have, a share in my poor Communions. I desire to become a saint; I desire to give myself entirely to Jesus, to whom I have been consecrated these fifteen years past, in this cloister of the Venerable Farnese. Oh, how I regret not having profited enough by the graces which God has given to me! My good Father, will I succeed in saving my soul? Oh, how great is my fear when I consider my tepidity in God's service! I implore then the help of your holy Sacrifices, and your episcopal blessing.

Humbly prostrate at your feet, I have the honor to be with the most profound respect and the most sincere veneration,

Your Lordship's

Most humble, most devoted and most grateful servant,

MARIA CLEMENTINA DI GESÙ.

Please give my regards to Father Francesco Longobardi, and believe me,

Your very humble and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 607.

To Father Francesco Longobardi, of the Pious Workers.

He speaks to him of the preceding letter.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 8, 1768.

It gives me pleasure that I received the letter which your Reverence has written to me, and I at once answered the letter of the nun of Rome, which is enclosed. Be so kind as to forward my answer through your brother, to whom I send my regards.

I continue to remain shut up in my shell without being able to move, and on the other hand my sufferings leave me no rest.

Your Reverence will, I hope, recommend me to the Lord, that he may deign to grant me the grace to conform entirely to his will.

If you have any news in regard to current affairs, please communicate it to me.

May you keep well. As for myself, I am at your command, and sign myself with profound respect,

Your most devoted and most grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 608.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Girgenti, in Sicily.

Accusations carried to Sicily against the Moral Theology of the saint.—Justification.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 8, 1769.

I believe, I have already written to you, that I had received a very courteous letter from the Viceroy of Palermo: he knows absolutely nothing about our affairs at Girgenti; and when they would be discussed, he said he would sustain us.[1]

Mgr. di Monreale[2] answered me in the same way: that he had not heard my Moral Theology spoken of; his letter is also most courteous.

The Archbishop of Palermo[3] has not answered me.

As for Counsellor Targianni, he wrote me a long letter to tell me that our Fathers at Girgenti easily give absolution. He then forcibly attacks the relaxed Moral Theology of the Probabilists. The letter is entirely in his handwriting.

I have written an answer to him, but I have not as yet sent it. I am waiting for the appearance of the little work in which I briefly defend myself from all the lax opinions which have been imputed to me.[4] I will then send both.

Tell me something about our affairs at Girgenti, and as soon as you hear the name of the bishop appointed for this

1 A Jansenist of Girgenti had declaimed against the Moral Theology of St. Alphonsus.

2 Francesco Maria Testa.

3 Mgr. Serafino Filingeri.

4 This little work is entitled: "Apology for the Moral Theology, accused by some of Laxism, etc."

See,[1] send me word; for I wish to write to him and be beforehand.

I continue to remain disabled, extended on my bed without the power of moving from it, and a prey to continual pain. It is already six months that I am in this painful condition. But I am satisfied, for all that; for God in his mercy makes me understand that all this is a great grace for me, and I am thankful for it. Continue, however, my dear Father, you and the others, to pray to God that he may grant me perfect resignation.

I bless you and all your subjects,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 609.

To Don Giuseppe Aiello, of the Congregation of Apostolic Missions.

Recommendations relative to a mission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 11, 1769.

I am consoled to hear that you and all your Fathers have arrived safely; please give my kind regards to them. You have then finished the mission at Airola and at Moiano, and the Lord has blessed your apostolic labors. I hope that the people will persevere in the practices of their religion.

I thank you very much for having distributed your Fathers among the hamlets of Luzzano and Bucciano.

You ask me to address the Prior of the Lombards[2] at

[1] The new Bishop of Girgenti, successor of Mgr. Andrea Lucchesi, was Mgr. Antonio Lanza, a Theatine, preconized, November 20, 1769.

[2] The Prior of the Dominican Fathers of the Province of Lombardy.

Durazzano; but I must say to you that there is nothing to be hoped for in that quarter. The Father General of these religious has in fact forbidden them by a special ordinance to allow any preachers or missionaries, not belonging to their Order, to preach in their churches. Thus, when three years ago, I wished a mission to be given at Santa Maria a Vico at Arienzo, in a Dominican church (there being no other church), I had to write to the Father General letter upon letter, and God knows with what reservations he granted me permission for *this once only*. For this reason, I have thought of intrusting this year the giving of the misssion at Santa Maria a Vico to the Dominican Fathers.

You will, moreover, be glad to hear that the houses hired at Durrazzano are very near the churches and convenient for the Fathers.

I would only regret that you would not be able to send at least three Fathers to the parish of S. Tommaso; for the mission there is most necessary, as the place is greatly destitute of spiritual help. I would prefer that a Father should rather be taken from Durazzano and be sent to S. Tommaso, the population of these hamlets being much greater than that of Durazzano. Try then, Very Reverend Father, to organize this mission according to my views.

It only remains for me to kiss your hand, while asking you to salute for me all your Fathers, especially the parish priest Bergamo.

Believe me,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,
and brother in Jesus Christ,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 610.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

The road of obedience is a sure road.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 18, 1769.

I began this morning to taste some of your excellent sweetmeats, and I again thank you for them; but I do not wish you to inconvenience yourself any more on my account.

You say that you are in a most dreadful state, but the Abbess is right in saying that you are in a good state; and I assure you that you are in the very best state. It matters little that you do not sensibly feel that you love God.

You say that you are continually distracted in the midst of the occupations in which you are engaged: oh! would to God that death, when it comes, may find you thus; it will find you actually doing the will of God. What especially pleases me is to hear, that you have understood the illusion in which you were, when you thought of retiring into solitude. The most necessary detachment is detachment from your own will, and it is this that you are practising at present.

You are dissatisfied with your state; and I am very glad of it, the more so as I now hear that you frequent Communion, and that you do not omit it as you did before—a neglect that made me fear for you.

Continue, continue with courage, even though all seems lost to you; all goes well. Be faithful in performing all that is told you by the Abbess, whom I wish you to obey in everything, even when she may not be any longer in charge. Her sentiments are entirely in accord with mine,

so that in obeying her you also obey me and God; and when one obeys, there is nothing to fear. Write about this to Father Savastano, and he will tell you the same thing.

I bless you; recommend me to Jesus Christ, that I may obtain resignation.

Your very obedient servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Mother Francesca Cattaneo, Princess S. Nicandro, Abbess of the convent of S. Chiara at Naples.

LETTER 611.

To Don Giuseppe Aiello, of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions.

He thanks him for having organized the missions as he wished.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 19, 1769.

I am exceedingly obliged to you for having organized the missions as I requested you to do.

I regret that your Fathers had at first inconvenient lodgings. But I am happy to hear that the good religious, of whom you speak, offered them hospitality. Kindly accept this offer, I beg you, and tell your Fathers to proceed at once to the convent. I will myself write to the Prior and his Community to thank them.

I limit myself to these few words, and I pray to God to keep you and your subjects in good health for his glory and the salvation of souls.

Continue to recommend me to Jesus Christ, and believe me,

Your very devoted and very grateful
servant and brother,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 612.

To the Same.

He asks him to help a desolate soul.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 19, 1769.

The enclosed letter will inform you with what anxiety the Mother Vicar at Airola, who has written to me, desires to receive a visit from Father Antonio de Martino. I beg you, be so good as to think of a means to quiet her, since she is so much tormented.

I say nothing more, as I know your zeal and the interest that you take in the tranquillity of a soul.

I have written to the Mother Vicar to send you a messenger to let you know on what day she will find it convenient to meet Father Antonio.

I recommend myself to your prayers, and I salute affectionately all the Fathers. Believe me,

Your very devoted, very grateful
servant and brother,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I thought that I would send you a messenger myself, to wait for your decision in regard to Airola.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 613.

To the Same.

He treats of the same subject and answers objections.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 19, 1769.

I beg you, and even insist as much as I can, not to leave in pain the poor religious whom I recommended to you this morning. Be without fear; Father Carace, at my request, lately sent a Father to hear the confession of a nun from Copertino to Nardo, a distance of twenty-four miles.[1] Now Father de Martino, being at S. Tommaso, needs only an hour to reach Airola. One day will suffice for going and returning, and I would thus be without scruples, and the religious without pain.

In addition to all the kind acts done for me, you will, I hope, add this one more. You can then write a note to Father Antonio, and the religious can send for him.

I rely on your kindness, and beg you to believe me,

Your very devoted, very grateful
servant and brother,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I earnestly entreat you to render this service to the poor religious. You can at least dispense from the Rule in this case.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

1 Father Aiello, it appears, alleged the Rule of the missionaries to the contrary. St. Alphonsus dissipates his scruple by citing the example of Father Tommaso Carace, a model of regular observance and, of old, one of the most deserving subjects of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions.

LETTER 614.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He exposes to him a troublesome affair and counsels a compromise.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO [January], 22, 1769.

You laughed, my dear Andrea, at the pretensions of D. Michele Volpe of Montella on account of the paper which he has in his hands, and which was lost by Father Fiocchi. You know that I have already written to him to induce him to return this paper to us, and I assured him that the money belonged to the Congregation and not to Father Ferrara. He answered me: "I have sent the paper to my son Don Cesare at Naples; he will examine it; and I will not take any steps before I have informed you of his decision."

He wrote me yesterday that the answer had arrived. "If the affair is prosecuted," he was informed, "great injury to the Congregation, but great profit to himself would be the result; for the conveyance of the property made through the advice of Father Fiocchi by the nun, the sister of Father Ferrara, clearly demonstrates the avidity of the Fathers for making acquisitions. Such a conveyance proves that the considerable sum coveted by the Fathers belongs to the heirs according to their own avowal."

He says in the second place: "This chaplaincy, which absorbs all the property of Father Ferrara, and the strict obligation of celebrating the Masses in your church; then the rights which are possessed on the property of Father Margotta by Father Caione who will afterwards convey it

[1] See Letter 605, page 320.—See especially footnote on page 321.

to another of your Fathers—all this evidently proves that you are evading the royal ordinances, and that in spite of them you wish to profit by the inheritance."

"Father Ferrara," he finally says, "has been constituted the heir by his father on condition that if he enters a Community or ecclesiastical association, he can no longer dispose of his portion (he has besides spent the latter during his life-time). He could not then, as he has done, employ the whole of it for the foundation of a chaplaincy to the prejudice of my mother-in-law, Father Ferrara's sister, of whom I am the heir. The six hundred ducats that have been left me, resulting from the sale of a house, are not sufficient for me; for my mother-in-law married without a capital, without a fixed dowry, consequently without having made any renunciation. I have, therefore, inherited, and should inherit all, since the brothers and sisters, as well as the nun, died intestate. The nun has been, moreover, a spendthrift by selling considerable property, besides some valuable furniture, and by keeping during a number of years the usufruct of the entire inheritance, to the exclusion of my mother-in-law. And now I should be satisfied with the remainder of so rich an inheritance!"

After making this series of observations he leaves the matter to my honesty.

Having seriously considered that this affair is of the greatest importance, in view of the grave injury that might be done to our Congregation at the present time, I wrote to Father Caione as follows: "When you are no longer occupied with mission-work, that is, in Lent, go to Montella and settle this affair in the best possible manner, and since Volpe can gain something, make a compromise; if he gives his consent that the Congregation should disburse a certain sum, you will bind yourself to pay so much a year." I have also sent him at the same time

Volpe's letter, so that he may be fully informed of all the reasons given by the claimant.

Please write to Father Caione to proceed to Montella to settle this affair, the more so, since I have begged Don Volpe not to take any steps before he has seen Father Caione who will meet him in Lent.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 615.

To Don Carlo Pavone, Royal Administrator of Nitre in the District of the Annunziata.

He asks a favor for a poor prisoner.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 23, 1769.

Dear and honored Sir: There is in the prison at Arienzo a poor wretch named Domenico Carcagna of S. Maria a Vico. He is one of my diocesans and has been imprisoned for three months on the false charge of smuggling nitre. He is sick at present, as appears from the report sent by the doctors to the governor. Be so kind as to have him released; for he lives only on alms, he possesses absolutely nothing, and he is dying of hunger.

I sincerely hope that you will grant this favor to this poor man, whom I have the honor of recommending to you, and you will thus prevent an innocent man from dying in prison; for I have been assured that he was arrested purely through calumny.

Do me this favor, my dear Carlo, and I will not omit to recommend you to the Lord.

Relying on your goodness, I beg you to believe me,

Your very devoted and very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in our house at Châteauroux, France.

LETTER 616.

To the Same.

He re-iterates his request while sending him the needed papers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 12, 1769.

Dear and honored Sir: I am profoundly grateful for the interest that you take in the affair of the poor prisoner. To comply with your request, I send you the required attestation which I hope will effect the release of an unfortunate man, who is groaning under the weight of years and of infirmities.

Believe me, my dear Carlo, you could not perform a greater act of charity.

I am contributing to the support of this poor man, but to release him is out of my power; hence I hope that you will do me the pleasure of setting him at liberty. You will spare me the horror of seeing him die without spiritual help, in a cruel prison.

While awaiting the honor of your commands, I remain with respect . . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 617.

To the Fathers in the House at Girgenti, Sicily.

Holy advice for meriting the protection of God amid persecutions.

[The year 1769?]

. . . . . We see that Jesus Christ with great love is defending us against all the efforts of hell; let us render thanks to him as well as to Mary who protects us in a special manner. I look upon it as certain that God takes our part, and will continue to take our part. The last anonymous denunciation,[1] of which you know, was of a nature to inspire me with fear; but I repeat, I see that God protects us.

I recommend to every one the observance of the Rule and, above all, of charity among ourselves. Let us remember that we are surrounded by enemies that wish to destroy us, at Naples as well as at Girgenti. If our conduct would not be what it ought to be before God, we should soon see ourselves totally ruined. I pray to God to protect your mission, so useful for the salvation of souls in that country. Let us pray, but let us be resigned if God wishes, or rather if he permits this work to be destroyed. As long as the Lord wishes this, *fiat voluntas ejus!* (Let his will be done!)

Quoted by Tannoia, Book iii. chap. xliii.

[1] The denunciation made to the viceroy. See Letter 608.

LETTER 618.

To Signora Maddalena Punzi, at Cava.

He recommends to her conformity to the will of God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 16, 1769.

I continue to do the will of God while keeping my bed, and I have now, besides my usual infirmities, a catarrh that causes a most troublesome cough. God permits all that for my good: may he be always praised!

Here is in a few words my answer to your letter: You may rest assured that under present circumstances I cannot do aught but recommend you to God, and pray him to hear you in the manner in which he judges it expedient for his glory.

In the mean time, always be perfectly resigned to the divine will, and do not grow discouraged. The Providence of God is great; it knows better than we what is necessary for us.

Continue to be well, and love our Lord very much. He indeed deserves our love, and when we love him, we cannot desire anything else than him.

Pray to God for me.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 619.

To Don Ottaviano Rainone.

He promises to favor when he can one that was recommended to him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 27, 1769.

Respected Sir: My health, thanks be to God, is rather better, and the season will, I hope, do me good.

I am very glad, that the little girl keeps very quiet and that she does not give much trouble to her mother, to whom I send kind regards.

In regard to the little piece of ground, sell it at the price you can; I willingly give my consent.

As for the young man whom you recommended through Don Felice,[1] I have had him examined and have found him absolutely incapable. Pardon me, therefore, if I do not now admit him; for I cannot do so. I hope to do so surely at the next ordination.

In the mean time make him study, so that he may know at least fairly the nouns and the verbs.

A thousand kind things to all the members of your family, and believe me, my dear Sir, to be desirous of giving you pleasure,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

[1] Secretary of the saint.

LETTER 620.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He moderates her penances and gives her other advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 1, 1769.

All your letters are full of discouragement.

You are discouraged; I, on the contrary, have great confidence that you are on the road to true sanctity. Do not think that I use the same language towards all my penitents that I am using towards you. Lately, one of them having actually grown cold and become relaxed even to lukewarmness, by earthly attachments, I wrote to her that I very much feared for her salvation, and that, if she did not apply a prompt remedy, I would regard her as a reprobate.

As to yourself, it is not true that you are far away from God; on the contrary, you are near him, since you are walking on the road of obedience.

As to the fasts, ask the Abbess again, what you are to do.

In regard to lying on the floor and using the discipline to blood, you must not speak of that now, because you still have pains in the stomach, and there are other troubles that afflict you; it is enough if you use the simple discipline.

In reference to your natural inclination to your relatives, to amusements, etc., you will not get rid of them before your death; it suffices that you do not commit in that respect a fault that is plainly voluntary, by committing a deliberate venial sin. Besides, I wish that you should walk onward with a holy liberty; what does not appear to you to be certainly a fault, do it freely.

During prayer, the less you kneel, the better it will be, because then you will be more recollected, since you suffer when you are kneeling.

By the grace of God I continue to feel better, but I have not yet left my bed.

A word for the Mother Abbess: Tell her that I will recommend her to God as she wishes me, but that she should do the same for me.

Sister Antonia[1] will do well to say more kind words to the nuns in favor of her servant; but if she meets with great resistance, I should not wish that this interference should be to her the occasion of interior troubles, much less of exterior troubles.

Continue to recommend me to Jesus Christ; I will not fail to do so for you after Communion. Live Jesus and Mary!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 621.

To Don Pasquale dell' Acqua, Royal Governor of Durazzano.

He begs him to confer a benefice on a very deserving priest.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 16, 1769.

The great services rendered by Don Giuseppe Razzano at the church of Durazzano, have excited my compassion for this priest on account of his poverty, and I have thought of having him named director of one of the

[1] Sister Antonia de Liguori, cousin of the saint.

confraternities of the place, the promotion of Don Bernardo to a parish having left a vacancy.

I believed that I had been successful in my design, when I learned that the Confraternity of Purgatory had made choice of D. Crescenzo Romeo. The latter called upon me and promised to co-operate with me in having Razzano appointed director of the Confraternity of S. Giacomo. Now I hear that this association has chosen for its director Don Angelo Amorizzo, and rejected poor Razzano.

I could indeed refuse to confirm this election and find means to put aside Amorizzo, who is still young and less competent than his competitor. But I do not wish to create difficulties for myself, and, therefore, I thought that I would have recourse to you. It would, in fact, be easy for you, by your powerful influence and wise counsels, to induce the confraternity to reverse its decision and to elect Don Razzano. The latter excites my compassion, and I should feel happy to see him named for the office.

You know, most honored Governor, in what critical times[1] we are living. Without embarrassment to myself, you can, if you wish, help me to reach this conclusion which is most just before God. I promise you, on the other hand, that on the first occasion that presents itself, I will remember Amorizzo. For this you may altogether rely on me.

As for the measures which you may take in favor of Don Giuseppe Razzano, I should feel obliged to you if you would make it appear that they are altogether your own. But enough on this point; you will, no doubt, be able to find the right means. I therefore count on you for the

[1] It was in fact the time when Tanucci adopted the most odious measures against the Holy See, and raised for the Church in the Neapolitan States all kinds of difficulties.

success of this affair, and full of confidence in your goodness, I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original, which is in the possession of D. Francesco Guarna at Pagani.

LETTER 622.

To Don Francesco Mostillo, Agent of the Duke of Maddaloni.

He defends himself for not taking certain measures before he had received better information.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 30, 1769.

I was ready to give the permission asked to place the Blessed Sacrament in the church of Carmel; for I believed that there was question about a real parish, and that no obstacles nor contradictions would arise. But the church of Carmel (so they have informed me) far from being a real parish, is subject to the cathedral for several reasons which have been mentioned to me. This is, therefore, a matter that requires elucidation by the study of the documents which exist on the subject.

For the rest, I hold the maxim that a bishop should not change what exists, except in the evident case of *injustice or error*. I will, therefore, take my time, and make no innovation till the affair is cleared up. May you enjoy good health, and believe me . . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 623.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He kindly encourages her in the trials to which she is subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 11, 1769.

Above all, be convinced that when you write to me, far from causing me any inconvenience or tediousness, you afford me consolation.

Why do you say that you have lost all, that you have missed your end, and other similar complaints? Nothing of the kind is true: go on; you are on the right road.

How pleased I am to learn that you are poor! I should desire (such is the *evil* that I wish you) that you be reduced to the extremity of being obliged to go begging in the monastery.

Jesus Christ has taken from you your spiritual Father; but he does not abandon you himself; be sure that he wishes you well, still more so than when he gave you consolations.

The words that you have spoken to the Abbess should not trouble you; for it is certain that she loves you. God permits this for your greater good, so that you may live detached from all creatures.

Do not omit Communion, even when it seems to you that you are in hell; nor should you omit your prayers, and other accustomed devotions, even if you should suffer a mortal dislike for them; let God arrange things.

You are dissatisfied with your state; and I am very much satisfied, because I see that you are detached from creatures. It matters little that the senses are attached to

them; it suffices that with the superior part of your will you wish only God.

I have begun to leave my bed, and even to take a short ride in the morning; but I have to be borne to the carriage in the arms of others.

Pray to Jesus Christ that he may make me do his will; I desire nothing else. I do not omit to pray for you every day at Communion. I bless you. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 624.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He protests against a usurpation of the episcopal revenues.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 15, 1769.

I learn that lawyer Giuseppe Mazzachera has, thank God, recovered his health and is now attending to business. On the other hand, the following fact has been reported to me. One of your soldiers, by order of Signor Francesco Mostillo, is going through the fief of Bagnoli and is exacting from the inhabitants, besides the dues of the pasturage, the tax of the bailiwick, of moneys and of measures. He goes even so far as to collect the dues that strangers must pay when they come to transact business in that place.

I, therefore, beg you again to appoint the time for a new meeting; for my conscience urges me to enter my protest, and as long as I see your subordinates thus audaciously usurping the rights of the episcopal revenues in regard to the fief of Bagnoli, I cannot be quiet.

Please to grant my request and deign to accept

the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 625.

To Don Pietro de Robertis, at Naples.

He appeals to his devotion in favor of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 9, 1769.

I hear that the affair of our Congregation, relative to the process of the chaplaincy[1] is inscribed on the list; please then devote yourself to it with the greatest care. Communicate with Signor Giovanni Barracano, and tell him that the Congregation will generously recognize his services.

I hope that you will cheerfully acquiesce in my wishes; for if we lose this case, great injury to the Congregation will be the result. Be then so kind as to take an interest in it.

I finish by placing myself at your command in everything that you may wish, and I beg you to accept the expression of perfect esteem with which I remain,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] My letter had been written, when a little box of sweetmeats arrived. I take the liberty of sending it to

[1] There was mention made of this chaplaincy in the preceding volume (Letter 312, page 526). A lawsuit had been begun in connection with this affair.

you. Please accept it, not as a discharge of my obligations, but as a mark of attention.

After the original preserved in the family de Robertis.

LETTER 626.

To a Nun at Naples.

Conditions on which he will express himself on the subject of a vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 6, 1769.

You write to me that Donna N. would like to know my opinion in regard to her vocation of being a Carmelite.

I answer that in a matter so delicate as that of vocation, I cannot give any counsel without knowing all the circumstances and all the motives on account of which she wishes to enter the Carmelite Order—whether it is not for the purpose of withdrawing herself from some disagreeable circumstance or constraint that she endures in the monastery in which she is, or for some other reason that does not entirely refer to God.

Besides, I should know how long a time she has felt this vocation, and whether she has considered the severity of the Rule of the Carmelites, among whom there is no parlor, no flesh-meat is eaten, every one is barefooted, the Office is said during the night, sleep is taken on a mattress or on a blanket. (I do not, however, know what is at present the practice of those religious in regard to sleeping.)

Moreover, I should like to be informed whether her health is strong enough to observe that Rule, and whether she is ready to suffer.

There is no doubt that the monastery in which she is at present, is good; and therefore I advised another person, N., to enter there, and from what I can see, she is satisfied.

What pleases me most in this house, is, that the officials do not expend money in the discharge of the duties of their offices.[1] In regard to this I say, and I beg you to make known my opinion to all these saintly religious, that the first one that introduces, from any motive whatever, the custom of incurring expenses for the offices, cannot be excused from a grave fault on account of the evils that result therefrom. It matters little that the expense is light, because all abuses begin in this way, and from being small become great.

Hence I repeat, I do not doubt that this monastery is a good monastery, and that every religious can sanctify herself therein. Nevertheless, if the vocation of Donna N. were genuine, and no impediment being in the way, I would greatly scruple to draw her away from it; for then she would be called to a stricter observance, in view of the rigor of the Rule of St. Teresa, and the Community life, and the poor life that is so rigidly observed in this Order.

I, therefore, beg you to communicate to her the contents of this letter, in order that she may plainly answer me all that I have indicated above; then I will give her a final decision. If she does not wish to write to me herself, you may let me know all the circumstances of her vocation, according to what I have said.

In offering you my kindest regards, I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

[1] For instance, in the office of sacristan. See on this subject preceding volume, Letter 71, page 152.

LETTER 627.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He gives her wise counsels of direction.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 6, 1769.

I see, you do not cease to inconvenience yourself by continuing to send me so many fine presents. All that I desire, is, that you should attain sanctity, and that you recommend me to Jesus Christ. But, I cannot do less than offer you my thanks for the magnificent present that you have just sent me.

Yes, I am better: I go out riding every morning and every afternoon by order of the doctors; my head is also better; but I cannot walk except by the aid of another, and my neck is quite bent. It is now a year that I have not been able to say Mass. May the will of God be always done!

Let us now speak of our affairs.

As for going to Naples, it is impossible at present, for I cannot make a long journey; during the little journey that I make in a coach, I feel as if my head was being torn from my shoulders.

In regard to the trouble you have with the Abbess, I rejoice that Jesus Christ has encouraged you with a ray of confidence. I pray to God, and do not cease to pray to him yourself, that he may give you confidence; for I see that you have little of it, and that the devil intends thereby to cause your utter ruin.

Moreover, I rejoice that the Abbess does not pass over any of your faults; this is a great help given to you by God—an advantage not possessed by the Queen of Naples. The great ladies of this world have around them only those persons that praise and flatter them; there is no one that

reproves them. In those cases in which you cannot receive the counsel that you would wish, do what Father Savastano would very likely counsel you, or what I, though a miserable sinner, would advise you.

In regard to the lay-sister, you have had her to enter the convent, because you were persuaded that she would be a good religious; but since she has behaved badly, the fault is her own. You might then, to put an end to the complaints of the nuns, write to her relatives to come to take her, if they do not wish her to be expelled from the monastery. If this is done, the nuns will have nothing more to say to you; but in the mean time do not trouble yourself about espousing the cause of that lay-sister, and say to your companions: "I am not supporting her; do what God inspires you to do; if you wish to send her away, do so."

As for Father Pisanelli, I advise you not to consult him; for every time he would come, the religious would become disquieted, and they would not leave you at rest. Say to Jesus Christ: *My Saviour, it is Thou who shouldst be my spiritual Father and my only resource, since among creatures I find no one to console me.*

After that, go on with confidence, being convinced that God wishes you well—much more so than you think. He wishes your entire sanctification. In all the trials that happen to you, I see so many dispositions of his Providence to make you a saint, and to make you belong entirely to him. *God! God! and nothing more!* Oh, happy the soul that speaks thus!

At Naples many things are said about my giving up the bishopric. I beg you to pray to God that in this matter I may perfectly accomplish his will; I desire nothing else for the few years or months of life that will remain to me.

Every day at Communion, as I do not say Mass, I never omit to recommend you to Jesus Christ. Live Jesus,

Mary, and Joseph! May Jesus Christ be the Master of your whole heart! Recommend me especially to the Blessed Virgin during this beautiful novena of her Assumption.

My secretary, who has been suffering from illness for a long time, asks you to recommend him to Jesus Christ. Perform this act of charity.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 628.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He submits one of his circulars to him and expresses a desire to see him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 14, 1769.

Please read the enclosed circular which I have addressed to all the houses. If it appears good to you, have the necessary copies prepared, and send them. If, however, it seems to you that something should be omitted or added, write to me about it and I will say *Amen.*

I wrote to you in my last letter that I should like to see you during the last days of September or at the beginning of October; for I have spoken to Mgr. Foschi; and as Mgr. d'Amalfi will then be here, we shall reach a decision.[1]

[1] This probably refers to the renunciation of the bishopric of Sant' Agata; and to the proposal to have as his successor the Bishop of Lucera in Puglia, Don Giuseppe Maria Foschi, or even the Archbishop of Amalfi, Don Antonio Puoti.

I recommend secrecy, especially in regard to those who are around me.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 629.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.[1]

He charges him with a commission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 22, 1769.

Yes, the writing enclosed in the new book is for Remondini.[2]

Inform Don Ercole that I do not say Mass, and, according to the opinion of the doctors, I shall nevermore say Mass.[3]

I have received the paper.

BROTHER ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Bishop of Sant' Agata.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Father Maione at that time resided at Naples in the house of our Congregation, and defended the Institute against its powerful enemies. He had before been living with the saint at Sant' Agata for several years.

[2] The Venetian publisher of the works of St. Alphonsus.

[3] So the saint spoke, but three days after, that is, on Saturday, August 26, Father Marcorio, Prior of the convent of St. Augustine, who had invited him to preach in his church on the following Sunday, pointed out to him a way of saying Mass. "Necessity," he said to him, "excuses you from the observance of less essential rubrics; and as to the fact of taking the precious blood, you could do so while sitting in your chair." The saint was filled with joy on hearing these words, and after having made two or three trials

LETTER 630.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He speaks to him about a mission that was to be given.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

August 29, 1769.

I am waiting for your answer in reference to the mission at Martina in the diocese of Taranto.

I was thinking of writing to the Archbishop [Mgr. Francesco Mastrilli], that after having calculated the expense of a journey as far as Martina, the Congregation finds that it is beyond its means, and that some aid should be furnished for this purpose.

I shall promise to contribute something myself; but I cannot do much; for I am burdened with debt on account of the poor whom it was necessary to assist during last year's scarcity.

However, before writing, I expect you to speak to Father Cimino; for he was in hopes to be able to make the journey with the aid of the religious at Conversano, who wished to have the mission for one of their estates near Martina.

of this method, he could, on August 27, celebrate with unspeakable consolation the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For a whole year he had not enjoyed this happiness. After Vespers, he went to preach in the church of St. Augustine, and after the sermon he thanked in glowing terms Father Marcorio for the precious counsel he had given him. On the same day he announced the happy news to Father Villani in the following words, which Father Tannoia has preserved for us: "To-day, the 27th of the current month, I began to say Mass, and I hope to continue to say it. The whole difficulty was to be able to take the precious blood, but a means has been found, and I used it this morning. *Gloria Patri!* I am going to preach to-day in a church which is much frequented." He meant the church of the Augustinian Fathers.

I bless you and all your subjects.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 631.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

Pastoral solicitude of the saint in regard to prisoners.[1]

ARIENZO, August 29, 1769.

I just now received the letter which you have done me the honor to write to me. You ask my opinion about the office of chaplain of the prisons. My opinion is as follows:

When I learned that there was question of appointing a chaplain to say Mass for the prisoners, I expressed a desire to the persons who spoke to me on the subject; namely, that the chaplain, besides saying Mass for these unfortunate people, should also give them a familiar instruction, and should administer the sacrament of penance to those that wish to go to confession.

I now learn through the letter which your Excellency has

[1] Alessio Pollio, a servant of St. Alphonsus, in the process of beatification, extols in the following terms the charity of his master towards the prisoners. "The venerable servant of God," he says, "exhibited the most lively solicitude in procuring spiritual and material help for the prisoners of his diocese. Through me and through others he sent them alms, and on all Saturdays he gave a grain to each one of them, although the prison was usually full. I do not speak of the extraordinary alms which he distributed to them when, for example, they could not find sufficient food, or when they had no money to procure their liberty. Those that were imprisoned for debts also received alms, and he interceded for them with their creditors to be indulgent to them. To aid spiritually these poor people, he sent them from time to time two Canons to hear their confessions, and thanks to his entreaties, the Duke of Maddaloni had a chapel erected in the prisons in which Mass was celebrated on feast days."

sent to me, that the priest Don Giacchino Cillo has been appointed to this office. This priest is, no doubt, edifying, and says Mass devoutly; but he is not the man that you or I would select to instruct these poor people and to give them good advice.

The most that Don Giacchino can do is to teach catechism as clerics do in the case of children; but this will be of little use, for the prisoners need a priest who carefully breaks to them the bread of the word of God. To teach them the letter of the catechism will not suffice; it will be necessary to give them explanations suitable to their comprehension, to show them briefly how to observe the commandments of God, and finally to teach them the manner of receiving the sacraments. Now Don Giacchino cannot do that.

In order, therefore, not to displease this good priest, whom your Excellency has already chosen, I propose another plan. To Don Giacchino the stipends of the Masses could be assigned from the church of which you have the right of patronage,[1] and a revenue of five or six ducats could be given to another priest who is to hear the confessions of the prisoners and to preach to them from time to time.

The church in question is rich, and it can, therefore, give alms; a greater alms than this, your Excellency may believe, cannot be given.

I could propose some good priests to you to fulfil the duties of this employment.

[1] The patron or founder of a church had a claim to certain honors, for example, to a special seat, to being incensed, and especially to be buried in the church. He also had the right to *present* the subjects for the benefices that he had founded. This last point created many difficulties for the bishops.

Please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble and very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Father Ignazio d'Aquino of the Pious Workers at Naples.

LETTER 632.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He expresses the desire to see him, and comments upon various subjects.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 1, 1769.

I have received your last letter, dated August 24.

As to the question of your journey hither, I told you that I should like it to take place when the Archbishop of Amalfi will be present, that is, before the beginning of October. We may then definitively regulate all that regards the time and mode [of my resignation].

If you could come about the 20th or 25th of September, I should be pleased; but then you would have to remain here till the arrival of the archbishop. On the other hand, I do not know what business you could transact during this time. I refer the matter to your prudence, and leave you at liberty to make the journey when you think best.

You have not yet told me, whether you have spoken to Father Cimino about the mission to begin at Martina, nor whether we may hope (as Father Cimino believed) to have our journey paid by the nuns [of Conversano]. The latter, you know, asked for a mission for one of their estates situated near Martina. I will then wait for your answer,

and will afterwards write to the Archbishop of Taranto.

Thank God, I continue to say Mass, but with a great deal of fatigue; I am all in perspiration when I have finished.

We shall speak of the application of the Mass, when you are here. In the meantime tell the house at Nocera not to make any intentions for the Masses which I say, for I must apply them for certain special obligations.

You did well not to send one of ours to Scala at the present time. I also know what called forth the order of the bishop; we shall speak of it when you come.

Since Brother Carlo is with you and desires to rest during four days to recuperate from his hard labors, I thought that I should send word to you to give him Donna Michela's clock.[1] Hardly a day passes that a request is not made to have this clock forwarded to Sant' Agata by Brother Carlo. If it keeps good time, send it by the messenger; but I beg you to have it well examined in order that I may not have to return it and pay double expense.

If the clock destined for Durazzano is ready, you may forward it by another person whom, however, Brother Carlo will send.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Please give the two clocks to the bearer. See that the one destined for Sant' Agata goes well, for I am under obligations to the lady in question. If the clock does not keep good time, it would be useless to send it.

I bless you and all your subjects.

[1] Brother Mattia Fazzano, who was then at Nocera, was a skilful clock-maker. The Superiors sometimes permitted him, either through gratitude or charity, to repair the clocks of persons of the world.

If Father Cimino could accompany you on your journey, I would feel glad; try then to bring him with you.

The governor of this place, Don Domenico Fiocchi, has written a note to me saying that he would like to see his son Don Carmine.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 633.

To Don Ottaviano Rainone.

He consents to a sale of a piece of land.

ARIENZO, September 23, 1769.

Dear Sir: I see by your letter at what price the land is valued which I bought for the purpose of building a new church. You may then, if you find no more advantageous offer, give it for fifteen ducats[2] to the nuns of whom you speak; after the deed has been made out, you will please send me the money.

I am glad that you and the members of your family are all well, and I remain,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Father Carmine Fiocchi.

[2] 64 frs.

LETTER 634.

To a Pious Maiden.

He counsels her to embrace the religious life.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 27, 1769.

I answer your letter.

A young person can save her soul by remaining in the world; but it cannot be denied, that in the world, especially at the present time, there are many more dangers of committing sin and losing one's soul.

The rule then to follow is this. If any person loves chastity, she ought to choose what is more perfect, that is, she should consecrate her virginity to Jesus Christ. By acting thus, she will be much less exposed to damn herself; and this is the counsel that I give you.

If you are going to be a nun, I should greatly desire that you be a true nun; that you receive Communion frequently; make meditation morning and evening; above all bear contradictions without complaining, and obey your Superiors without replying. If, therefore, you wish to enter religion, it will be necessary for you to behave now as a religious. I will recommend you to Jesus Christ. Please render me the same service, and believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Signora Carmela del Iorna, née Punzi, at Cava-dei-Tirreni.

LETTER 635.

To Don Salvatore Tramontano, at Naples.

Charity of the saint towards a repentant sinner.

[The year 1769?]

I hear that the mother of the young girl[1] called. Although very poor, she appears to be a very good woman; for this reason I intend to send her to Naples to seek her daughter and to keep her in her own house.

I have promised to assist her and to give her a monthly allowance; but I hear that the girl is in the greatest destitution; she must then be clothed from head to foot.

Be so kind, therefore, to provide for her at my expense, but with as little outlay as possible. First, procure for her two chemises, which should be new; a kerchief for the head, and another for the neck, a serge garment, plain undergarments, an apron of ordinary material, a pair of white stockings, and a pair of shoes.

But I do not wish them all to be quite new, because that would cost too much. Such things may be had at any old clothes' shop. But be sure you buy only such articles as are still in good condition; for if you bought old goods, I should have to begin over again to-morrow.

I should not take the liberty to burden you with all this

[1] Father Tannoia thus speaks of this in the Life of St. Alphonsus (bk. iii. chap. lx.): "A young girl, to the great regret of her afflicted mother, had ruined both her soul and body by her debaucheries. When she was reduced to the last extremity, she applied to the House of the Incurables at Naples. Alphonsus did not lose sight of her, and hastened to recommend her to the notice of several priests. Misfortune seconded the workings of grace, so that the unhappy girl at last saw into the evil of her ways and wept over her past misconduct. This moved St. Alphonsus to tears; he sent for the mother, and engaged to provide for the wants of her daughter." Such was the occasion of this letter.

commission; but I know your charity. In any case you can consult Brother Francesco [Tartaglione] and then inform me how much money I have to send to you. As soon as the girl is clothed I shall make her return with her mother.

I recommend to you this work of charity, and remain, etc.

After an old copy.

LETTER 636.

To the Same.

He refutes certain accusations brought against him.

[The year 1769?]

I have seen by your letter what a bad opinion Father N. has of me. It is useless for me to write to him. St. Francis de Sales, Father Torres, and a host of others did not defend themselves.

The three who govern my diocese are: the Vicar-General who is occupied in the chancery; Archdeacon Rainone who directs the affairs of the *curia* at Sant' Agata; and Don Felice who neither governs nor has charge of anything.

It is said that I do not show hospitality.—I assert on my conscience that the fulfilment of this duty is to me a source of embarrassment and of continual expense. Arienzo, where I reside, is in fact in the centre of numerous villages, and I have strangers to lodge, so to speak, every day; therefore, I must always have several beds ready, and when there are many persons, I have often to borrow things from my neighbors.

Tell me, my dear Don Salvatore, where is the diocese in which there are not some troubles? For my part, I do what I can; but there is no land that does not produce weeds; if you root out one, another will spring up else-

where. But I see that it is impossible to hinder people from complaining; it suffices if God does not complain. It is for me, moreover, a salutary thing; it contributes to make me humble when I see myself thus abused and discredited, and I pray to God to make my detractors more holy than they are.

You will oblige me, if you tell Father N. to call upon me; the truth of things will then be made clear to him on all points. . . .

[We here give a fragment of a very interesting letter, published by Father Tannoia in his Memoirs, which refers to another reproach cast upon St. Alphonsus.]

As to the murmurs relative to my publications, I will say that the bishops that are most celebrated for their great zeal, preached and published works while ruling over their dioceses; for example, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Francis de Sales, Mgr. Sarnelli, and others. I am always shut up during the winter, and converse with no one; besides, every one avoids my conversation, because it is not agreeable. I make mental prayer three times a day, make an hour's thanksgiving after Mass, as well as a spiritual reading, at least when I am at liberty. After that I try to profit by all the time remaining to me in laboring at things that seem to be useful.

As for the books that I have had printed, I have been repaid for the expenses; besides, they are books that are necessary for my diocesans; and with the exception of that which I wrote against Patuzzi, all the rest have been composed expressly for the ecclesiastics and confessors of the diocese, as the *Way of Salvation*, the *Country Confessor*, which are of great value here.

As for the *Instruction for Confessors*, I have also written it for my diocese; and I can assure you that it is better

than all that I have ever seen on this subject, as they are all full of trifles with the exception of one; yet even that is too long.

Cited by Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xli.

LETTER 637.

To a Nun at Naples.

Note in regard to a vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 20, 1769.

The affair in regard to the Carmelite has indeed turned out in a most singular way.[1] I hope that God has not called her to that life; for if she has been unfaithful to her vocation, I should not wish to be responsible for her soul.

Pray for me and please accept the expression of my respect.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 638.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He traces out a line of conduct, and adds particular advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 26, 1769.

I hear with regret that for some time you have not received my answers. I recently wrote you a long letter in answer to yours. I do not remember all that it contained; but I especially remember that I told you to resume your old penances, to continue to follow the counsels of your Abbess, and not to call any more for Father Pisanelli,

[1] See Letter 626, page 346.

because every time the monastery becomes excited, and you are thereby disturbed. I do not remember the rest.

I repeat to you that your state of coldness does not make me uneasy; if you have patience, and if you do not give up your ordinary exercises, even this coldness will help you to sanctify yourself. But I fear for you when you voluntarily omit prayer or Communion.

Be careful, as you have mentioned, to show special affection for those religious that offend you or despise you. It matters not that interiorly you feel repugnance in regard to them; for this is an effect of our corrupt nature. It suffices that you wish them well with the superior part of your will, and that you show yourself friendly to them.

As to myself, thanks be to God, I continue to say Mass. Never forget me after Communion; I do not forget you at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

May Jesus Christ fill you entirely with his holy love!

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I recommend to you especially conformity in all things to the will of God; *in this all perfection consists.* In meditation the object of your whole application and of all your prayers should be to know the will of God, and to accomplish it in a perfect manner. Please also to ask the same grace for me. Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

After an old copy.

LETTER 639.

To Don Salvatore Tramontano, at Naples.[1]

He humbly answers the criticisms of certain censors.

ARIENZO, October 30, 1769.

. . . . . For the government of my diocese, my dear Don Salvatore, I cannot do more than I am doing. I do not sleep; I neglect nothing; I put off nothing; and if I must administer chastisement, or give admonition, I attend to it as soon as possible.

To shut the mouths of malcontents is, moreover, quite impossible.

At present I am keeping nine of my priests in exile. The affairs of my diocese impose upon me, it is true, two Vicars-General, one of whom lives at Arienzo, the other at S. Agata; but all other affairs of government pass through my hands; and notwithstanding all that, certain weeds are scarcely rooted out, when others continually spring up.

[1] This excellent priest appeared as a witness at the process of beatification of St. Alphonsus. "I was about thirteen years old," he says in his deposition, "when during a sojourn at Nocera I was made acquainted with the servant of God, and had the happiness to hear him preach repeatedly in the church of the Blessed Sacrament. From Naples, where I lived, I frequently went to Nocera, either to spend my vacation there or for other reasons, and thus I became better acquainted with Don Alfonso; for I went to his convent of S. Michele to hear him preach, as he did this usually on Saturdays. In 1765, our acquaintance become more intimate; the servant of God lived in his diocese of S. Agata, and I called upon him, either to pay him a visit, or to consult him about my interior. I also had several interviews with him when he went to Naples to attend to business, either before or after his episcopate." This worthy priest contributed much towards procuring the glory of St. Alphonsus; in fact, he furnished many notices on the Life of the holy bishop, and collected a large number of his letters, especially those which the saint had written to Sister Brianna Carafa and to Sister Giovanna della Croce.

Please to ask Jesus Christ to grant me light and strength to accomplish his will, above all in what has reference to the resignation of my bishopric.

These past few days Father Villani, my director, and I have examined this matter, and we have decided that I should write to the Pope to expose to him all that regards my health, my age, and my government. I will then leave all to his decision, whether he accepts my resignation or leaves me at the head of my diocese, as crippled as I am.

Thank God, I say Mass every morning; but God knows with what great effort! . . . . .

After an old copy.

LETTER 640.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He gives him the power to dispense a professed member from the vows.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 31, 1769.

Father Bartolomeo de Masi wrote to me the day before yesterday, that for several reasons he could no longer remain in the Congregation.

I sent him word that this was all a temptation, that he should recommend himself to God, who would deliver him from it, that, if he acted contrary to my advice, he would surely repent of having left the Congregation and would have no hope of being ever able to return. I thought that he would decide upon following my salutary advice; but more excited than ever, he wrote me another letter that was still worse than the first; I herewith enclose it. It seems to me that to judge by this letter, we can entertain no longer any hopes for him. Please then examine seriously into this matter; and if the case appears to you to be

desperate, grant to this Father a dispensation in my name. For this purpose I give you full power, and I leave the whole affair on your conscience.[1]

Recommend me to God. I bless all.

Believe me, Reverend Father . . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved at Oxford (England) in the domestic chapel of Mr. Hartwell, lay chamberlain of Pope Leo XIII.

LETTER 641.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

Incidents relative to the Redemptoristines at S. Agata.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 20, 1769.

In answer to the letter with which you have honored me, I would say that I am under great obligations to the very learned lawyer Don Giovanni Maria Puoti. In several deliberations and discussions, which took place in my presence, he most skilfully crushed the different kinds of opposition that had arisen without a shadow of reason at S. Agata against a monastery, the nuns of which spread everywhere the good odor of their virtues.

As to the two sisters of Speltri,[2] I will continue as heretofore to give help for their subsistence, and to follow your recommendations. I will ask Mother Superior that she should take care that the dowries of these two sisters should be paid at the end of the second year of the novitiate with the other emoluments due to the monastery.

[1] The dispensation was actually granted a short time afterwards. Father de Masi had made his profession, December 5, 1764.

[2] "The sisters of Speltri were natives of Vitulano. Their brothers, dissatisfied with the step they had taken, refused to pay their dowries. This opposition ceased some years later, and the dowries were paid." (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. xxviii.)

The dowries, as well as the arrears of pensions of the sisters of Speltri, will be employed in the purchase of real estate, a deduction being made of the expenses incurred by the monastery.

Awaiting your orders, I have the honor to be with the most profound respect,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 642.

To a Superior of Nuns of his Diocese.

He severely punishes a lay-sister.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 20, 1769.

Very great was the sorrow I felt in reading in your letter that one of the lay-sisters, after having abused a choir-nun and resisted her, has had the temerity to break the enclosure, and to go out on the public road.

The lay-sister has, therefore, incurred excommunication, and I have not the power to absolve her. A letter must be addressed to Rome for this purpose; and in regard to this have an understanding with the archpriest, to whom for want of time I cannot write.

Such scandalous behavior merits a very severe chastisement, for the purpose, either of checking the diabolical boldness of this sister, or of making her serve as an example to the others. Nevertheless, wishing to use some moderation, I ordain that the following penance shall be imposed upon her: During six months she shall be deprived of holy Communion; it shall be positively forbidden her to go to the parlor, and she shall fast on bread and water twice a month, that is, every fortnight—a penance

that she shall perform in the refectory in the presence of all. If, however, she be not obedient in everything, a more severe penance shall be imposed.

I entreat you to take care that the keys are never left near the door.

I conclude by blessing the Community, and begging all of you to recommend me to the Lord in your prayers.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 643.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Necessity of detachment.—Choice of a director.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 22, 1769.

You see that Jesus Christ wishes to detach you from everything, even from your director; but when he deprives you of your director, he obliges himself to take his place.

If you remain afflicted on account of the departure of your director, you make it manifest that you do not love God only. *Deus meus, et omnia!* [My God and my all!] God is the confessor, is relative, is everything.

Now that you are without a director, you must take another; for God wishes that we should walk under obedience.

If you have not yet chosen him, you would find a good one in Father Chiesa,[1] or in another Father of S. Giovanni a Carbonara, whose name I have forgotten, but whom you can easily find out, since he is confessor of the ladies Farao at *Miracoli.*

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, and let us embrace the cross.

[1] Father Giannicola Chiesa, of the Hermits of St. Augustine, lived at Naples in the convent of S. Giovanni a Carbonara.

I am in bed, sick of a fever and of a violent catarrh of the chest, which is a dangerous illness for me. May God do as he pleases!

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 644.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He recommends to him a mission and speaks to him of a process that was pending.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 12, 1769.

I have just heard of the death of Father Apice.[1] *Gloria Patri! Fiat voluntas tua!*

[1] Father Bernardo Apice died on Saturday, December 7, 1769, the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Immediately after his death a picture of him was taken on canvas, at the bottom of which were placed the following lines:

"R. P. BERNARDUS APICE CONGR. SS. REDEMPTORIS
SACERDOS
AGRIGENTINÆ DOMUS VIGILANS OLIM RECTOR
AB OTIO QUAM MAXIME ABHORRENS
MORUM SUAVITATE
ANIMARUM CHRISTI SANGUINE REDEMPTARUM ZELO
FERVIDA IN DEIPARAM DEVOTIONE
MULTISQUE NOMINIBUS EXCELLENS
NATUS EST STABIIS DIE 21 DECEMBRIS 1728
INTER PRIMORES EJUSDEM CONGREGATIONIS HABITUS
A MULTIS PRÆSULIBUS AVIDE FUIT EXPETITUS
OBIIT NUCERIÆ PAGANORUM
DIE 7 DECEMBRIS ANNO 1769
ÆTATIS SUÆ 41."

(Rev. Father Bernard Apice,
priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

The enclosed letter will inform you what is the wish of Prince della Rocca. The following was my answer: "The Fathers are scattered at this moment; I do not know whether they can assemble, so as to go to Perdifumo; but I have, nevertheless, asked Father Villani to regulate this mission. I hope that during the carnival he will comply with your request; otherwise the mission will be assured to you for Easter Monday." Please, therefore, arrange matters so as to satisfy the prince, and answer my letter.

Father Maione writes to me to-day that the Baron of Ciorani [D. Nicola Sarnelli] is earnestly pushing his process; the clerk of the district, Don Francesco Cito, is already charged with the making of a report; but Maione went to see the latter in company with Barracano, and both begged him not to make his report before examining the documents that we shall transmit to him.

Celano and Barracano, Father Maione also tells me, have been of opinion to give Cito, when they hand him the documents, twelve ducats for his report; as Father Maione was without money, I paid these twelve ducats.

For the case of Ciaramella nothing as yet has been done.

Once Rector of the house of Agrigente,
was admired for his vigilance,
his horror of idleness, his meekness,
his zeal for the salvation of souls,
his ardent devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin.
Reputed one of the best subjects of this Institute,
he was sought after by many prelates
for apostolic labors.
Born at Castellammare, December 21, 1728,
he died at Nocera de' Pagani
December 7, 1769,
at the age of 41 years.

His Life was written by Father Agostino Saccardi, a Redemptorist, and was published at Naples in 1816 by Giovanni de Bonis.

I recommend myself to your prayers, and I bless you and all your subjects. Please write to Prince della Rocca.

BROTHER ALFONSO.

[*P. S.*] From Frasso I have been asked for two Fathers for Passion-week; have the goodness to provide them, as this place has no preacher.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 645.

To a Superior of a Monastery in his Diocese.

He thanks her for her congratulations for the festival of Christmas.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 13, 1769.

I thank you and all your Sisters for the prayers that you have addressed for me to the Most High. I have not failed, on my part, to pray also to your intention, and to call down upon you an abundance of heavenly blessings. But I will do so with greater fervor at the approaching Christmas holydays, and I beg you to do me the same favor.

Thanks for the sweetmeats and the confections which you have sent me. I cordially give to all my pastoral blessing.

Believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 646.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He speaks to him about his plan of resignation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

January 5, 1770.

I hear that the bishops named by the Pope, have already obtained the *exequatur*.[1] I wish, therefore, to broach the affair of my resignation, but in the manner in which I have spoken to you, that is, without proposing any one as my successor, and without sending a formal renunciation.

After having exposed to the Pope the state in which I am, I will tell him that I desire to learn from his mouth the will of God in regard to me, and that if he thinks of accepting my resignation, I will send it immediately.

But before taking this step I should like to converse with you once more; for I do not wish to risk anything, lest I should have to repent of it later on. . .

There came here this morning a deacon, from N.;[2] he wishes to enter the Congregation; his bishop, to whom he has spoken, is not opposed to his resolution. I have myself examined the circumstances and have found no difficulty.

I have, moreover, written to Father N. to examine more carefully into the present circumstances and, if he thinks fit, to have the applicant to enter the novitiate.

[1] Many episcopal Sees in the kingdom of Naples were Pontifical nominations; for example, Sant' Agata de' Goti. The civil authority having, it appears, relaxed in its severity and given the *exequatur* to the Apostolical Bulls, St. Alphonsus felt the hope arise in him that he would soon have a successor, and resolved to offer for the third time his resignation.

[2] This was probably the subdeacon Alessandro Lavorgna, who entered the novitiate, February 2, of the same year, 1770.

This is all that I have to say to you. I bless you.

Cited by Father Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter l.

LETTER 647.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Solicitude of the saint for the temporal interests of the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 23, 1770.

I have read your letter, and here are twelve ducats[1] for Cito's report. I know all about that writing.

As for the process of Ciaramella, you tell me that if we lose it, we shall have to restore nine hundred or a thousand ducats. It is precisely in regard to the question of the nine hundred ducats that I desired an explanation. Try to unravel this matter with Father Fiocchi or with others who understand it.[2]

I bless you and remain . . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 648.

To Prince della Riccia.

He asks him to put an end to a public scandal.

February 17, 1770.

. . . . . [Those two women] are so loose in their manners that they give public scandal and threaten to pervert even

[1] 51 frs.

[2] Mention was made in Letter 312, page 526, vol. i. of *Letters*, of Abate Ciceri. St. Alphonsus had received from him the right of nomination to a laic chaplaincy. The Abate having died, his relatives did not fail to begin a lawsuit.

respectable people. There is, moreover, no hope of amendment.

This is a thorn that pierces my heart; and as I cannot remedy the evil, I invoke the energetic support of your Excellency.

I beg you to write in the most pressing terms to the governor, to put an end to this horrible scandal, to these frightful disorders, either by imprisonment or by banishment.

Your Excellency will, I hope, pardon me for importuning you so often; but I know no one that could aid me as much as you who take so much interest in matters concerning the glory of God.

Cited by Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xlix.

LETTER 649.

To Don Michele N.

He exhorts him to patience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 25, 1770.

I see by your letter what pains you suffer. I heartily compassionate you, and I will not fail especially to recommend to the Lord you and your wife. He will grant you, I hope, the grace of carrying out the good resolutions that you have made for the good of your soul and for your own tranquillity.

Offer your pains to the Lord and the Blessed Virgin in all patience and resignation. I could not give you any other advice.

Pray also for me, and believe me,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 650.

To the Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

A discussion having been raised about the terms of a privilege, he concludes that it is forbidden, in the Congregation, to say Mass in the rooms of the sick.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, at the episcopal palace, March 4, 1770.

My very dear Brethren in Jesus Christ: I have already written several times that we cannot say Mass in the rooms of the sick. To-day I wish to explain this to you more at length, and I beg you all not to write any more about this matter, since I hold for certain that this cannot be done.[1]

Here are the words of the privilege granted in 1729 by the Pope Benedict XIII. to the Superior of the Pious Workers: *We grant the faculty of erecting, not only in your houses in the city, but in those outside of it, as also in the country-houses of the Congregation, oratories for divine service, chiefly for the solace of the sick, when any one of your members should become ill.*[2]

The Pope, therefore, distinguishes three classes: 1. The houses *in the city*, which are, for example, the houses that the Pious Workers have in the city of Naples; 2. The houses *outside of the city*, which are the houses founded outside of the city, as Santa Maria de' Monti at Naples, and Santa Balbina at Rome; 3. Finally, the *country-houses* which are expressed by the word *ædes*, as the house that the Fathers have at Somma, where, without the authoriza-

[1] See, further on, the circular of April 3, in which the saint adopted a contrary opinion.

[2] "Erigere, non solum in domiciliis vestris urbanis, sed etiam suburbanis, et etiam Congregationis ædibus, oratoria ad rem divinam faciendam, ad ægrotantium præsertim solatium, cum quisquam ex sodalibus vestris morbo decumberet . . ., facultatem elargimur."

tion of the bishop, they may erect an oratory, that is, a chapel in which they may celebrate Mass.

I confess that I was wrong, when at first I thought that one could say Mass in the cells; for I said that, if in the house there was only a common oratory, even if there were several oratories, this would be no special favor for the sick. But afterwards on reflection I perceived that the oratory having been granted even for country-houses, the Fathers would then have the advantage of saying and hearing Mass in the house, and this would be especially consoling for the sick: *Ad ægrotantium præsertim solatium.*

I have read the paper written by Father Tannoia, who tries to prove that the word *ædes* also signifies room or cell according to the examples given in the dictionary of Facciolati.

I have also consulted Facciolati, and an older dictionary, as also the one published at Turin. In them I have found that the word *ædes*, according to the natural and ordinary sense, signifies house, and not room or cell, especially when it is in the plural. These are the words of Facciolati: *Sed tamen, pro ædificio profano, frequentius plurali numero usurpatur; cujus rei passim occurrunt exempla.* Observe the words *frequentius* and *passim.* It follows that the word *ædes, ædium*, is commonly used for *house*, since *passim* the authors render it by *house.*

It is true that it is sometimes used for *room, cabinet*, or *cell;* but this is when the sense is indicated by the context, as we see in this passage of Quintus Curtius: *Proximi foribus ædis in qua rex acquiescebat;* as also in this: *Ad fores ædis ejus, in qua rex vescebatur.* Here *ædes* signifies a room; but this sense is determined by what follows, namely, *vescebatur* and *acquiescebat.* In the same sense must be taken the words of Virgil, quoted by Facciolati: *Aut intus clausis cunctantur in ædibus omnes;* here, *ædibus* signifies cells, as is indicated by the context, since there is

question of bees. We may observe the same thing in this passage of Plautus, quoted in the grammar of Port-Royal: *Insectatur omnes domi per ædes;* here you have the determinative word *domi*, Plautus saying, *ædes domi.* But when the word *ædes* stands alone, and when the sense of *room* or *cell* is not specified by the context, as Facciolati says *passim*, according to the natural sense, *ædes* in the plural is used for *house.* This is the reason why ordinary letters are dated from convents: *Ex ædibus Sancti Dominici, Sancti Laurentii, etc.*, and therefore for this reason the privilege says: *Congregationis ædibus.* If we should understand thereby: *ædibus domorum Congregationis*, and should say that these words signify: Even in the cells of the Congregation,—this would be an altogether inappropriate manner of speaking.

Moreover, if the privilege were valid for the sick in this sense, it would be necessary, according to the letter of the text, to say that to all, even to those that are in good health, it is allowed to hear Mass in their rooms, as Father Pavone maintains; he would be right if *ædes* could signify cells, since the word *præsertim* indicates that thereby are comprised all the members of the Congregation, those that are in good health as well as those that are sick. However, Father Pavone is wrong when he says that every member of the Congregation may himself erect an altar in his room; for the power of erecting an altar is given only to the Superior-General.

I repeat, therefore, that it is useless to write again about this question; for I am firmly of the opinion, that according to the privilege we may celebrate only in the common oratories, designated by the Rector Major. I hope that all will observe the obedience that I impose of no more saying Mass in the rooms of the sick.

I bless you all.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 651.

To Father Stefano Longobardi of the Pious Workers.

He asks him whether the Pious Workers have the privilege of celebrating Mass in the rooms of the sick.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 19, 1770.

Very Reverend Father: Be so kind as to give me precise information on the following point. A privilege granted by Benedict XIII. to the Superior-General of your Congregation of Pious Workers (with which my humble Congregation is in communication as regards privileges) permits you to erect oratories *ad rem divinam faciendam in domibus urbanis et suburbanis ac Congregationis ædibus*, in favor of the sick who are confined to bed. I would like to know whether by virtue of this privilege you may celebrate Mass in the cells of the sick.

In my Congregation some say that this is allowed; others deny this absolutely, and maintain that only the Rector Major can erect fixed oratories in a determined place in the houses of the Congregation. This last opinion is also mine.

But certain members of my Institute say that the Fathers of the Pious Workers have celebrated in the past and celebrate at present, the holy Sacrifice in the rooms of the sick Fathers or Brothers. Will your Paternity, please, give me exact information on this point, and tell me whether any Father of your Congregation has celebrated in the past or celebrates at present, holy Mass in the room of any sick subject, and, moreover, on what grounds this has been done in the past or is done at present?

I offer you my most sincere thanks for the two volumes of Father Sabbatini which you have been so kind as to lend

me. By this time, I hope, they will have been returned to you.

I always depend on your kindness which I most highly esteem, and while humbly kissing your hand, and recommending myself to your fervent prayers,

I remain,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 652.

To the Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He acknowledges the existence of a privilege granted to his Congregation in favor of the sick.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 3, 1770.

I write again in reference to Mass being said in the rooms of the sick, and I inform you that I retract what I have written in my last letter; for, in order to be more sure, I wrote to Father Stefano Longobardi, who being advanced in years, after having been Superior [of the Pious Workers], well knows the affairs of his Congregation.

He recently answered me that even at present his Congregation, *when the place is decent, erect there an altar and have Mass celebrated without difficulty.* Then in another part of his letter he writes: "As for the Masses that we celebrate for the solace of the sick, I say that the Pious Workers make no difficulty in having Mass said even in the rooms of the sick, because it is for this purpose that the request was made on our behalf, namely, that the sick

who could not leave their rooms, might have this consolation."

This is what I wished to know, whether the Pious Workers had made this request specially for erecting an altar in the rooms of the sick. Hence we now very well understand the words of the privilege: *Ad ægrotantium præsertim solatium, cum quisquam* (and here is what has the greatest force) *ex sodalibus vestris morbo decumberet.* I now clearly see that the words of the Pope are in accordance with the request that was made (although before they were doubtful to me), since the words *Cum quisquam* . . . especially indicated the solacing of the sick who cannot leave their beds.

Consequently, in order that the privilege may not remain useless for the bed-ridden sick, for whose particular benefit this favor has been granted, they may have Mass in their rooms. Add to this that according to the teachings of the Doctors (which I have verified) privileges granted to Communities, should be interpreted in a wide and even in a very wide sense.

But there is no authority for saying, as has been said, that resting on the word *præsertim,* those that are in health, may also have Mass in their rooms; for this faculty having been given to the Rector Major, the Pope never thought that the Superior could also allow an altar in the rooms of those that are in health. Another has written me a letter in which the word *ædes* is made to signify cells, but this can in no way be admitted, because in the privilege, *ædes* signifies the houses that the Congregation owns in the country, and not cells.

One other difficulty still remains, namely, whether the privilege given to the Pious Workers, being a very extraordinary thing, is also communicated to us; but then I am convinced that it is actually communicated to us, since with us are found the same reasons as are found with the Pious

Workers. One may read further details on this matter in the Theology of Salamanca, tom. iii. tr. 18, *de Privil.* n. 111—118.

I beg, however, the Reverend Rectors to use this privilege with much prudence, and to take care that *the rooms of the sick in which there is question of putting up an altar may be in a condition fit for the holy Sacrifice.* Father Longobardi writes me that the Pious Workers are very particular on this point.

Moreover, as I am far from home, I intrust to the Rectors the faculty that has been given to me, so that they may use it with discretion.

I bless you all, and I recommend myself to the prayers of each one.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata, and Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

LETTER 653.

To Prince della Riccia.

He begs him to put an end to a grave disorder.

ARIENZO, April 25, 1770.

A certain Giuseppe Napolitano of Luzzano has refused for many years to fulfil his Easter duty under the pretext that he is subject to attacks of insanity; and what is worse, he prevents his sister from frequenting the sacraments.

The parish priest of the place, different priests and gentlemen, have strongly urged me to ask your Excellency to have this man imprisoned. As the interdict has no effect upon him, this would be the only means to make him enter into himself and induce him to fulfil his duty.

I know the zeal with which your Excellency is animated for the welfare of your vassals. I have, therefore, full

confidence that you will give the governor the necessary orders, and I offer to furnish the daily subsistence to this unfortunate man.

I am always at the service of your Excellency, and I beg you to accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] Several gentlemen of Airola have just told me, that Giuseppe Napolitano is not at all insane, but that he is a rogue; please, therefore, to interfere, since it is now four years that he has prevented his sister from attending to her Easter duty; this she bitterly deplores.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 654.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He counsels and encourages her.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 6, 1770.

I was consoled by reading your act of consecration, because it seems to me to be heartfelt. I hope, and you should hope also, that God, who has inspired you with it, may give you strength to accomplish what you have

[1] This letter which had for its aim the safeguard of Christian liberty of conscience had happy results; the guilty man was imprisoned, and his sister could thenceforth frequent the sacraments. (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. lxii.)

promised him, especially that you may belong entirely to him, and never take back your will.

I do not know what to say in regard to that sick person: on the one hand, I would like to enter into the views of the Abbess, who is much troubled on this account; on the other hand, I am certain that such company in your room must distract you very much, and consequently injure you considerably in the state of aridity in which the Lord wishes to keep you, and in which you should be satisfied to remain, not only during your whole life, but for all eternity, if such be the will of God. At least, while the sick person is using remedies in that cell, it is desirable that another cell, however wretched it may be, should be given to you in order that you may be alone; and then you should not fail to go to console the sick one by visiting her from time to time.

I again recommend to you never to omit Communion, and never to fail in your obedience to the Abbess; she is of great help to your soul, even though the sensitive part of it may have to suffer on that account.

When you feel such dryness that you cannot have even a good thought, take care to read from time to time (for I do not wish you to strain yourself by reading a long time) either Gerson, or some other book of piety that may please you more, even when it may seem to you that you draw no fruit therefrom. The water that flows by, always leaves behind some little moisture.

I entreat you, drive away from your mind all notions of discouragement; for the devil puts forth great efforts to make you lose all by this means. Say to Jesus Christ: O Lord! were I even certain that Thou hast abandoned me, I would not leave Thee; and even though Thou shouldst hate me, I will nevertheless love Thee always.

Recommend me to Jesus and to Mary. I bless you and remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 655.

To Don Massimo Selvaggi, Superior of the Missionaries of S. Maria della Purità at Naples.

He congratulates him on his election and asks him for missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 7, 1770.

I have just learnt that you have been appointed Superior of the Congregation of the Priests of S. Giorgio. I am glad of this, and I earnestly beg you to be so kind as to come to evangelize my diocese, not next winter, but during the winter of 1771.

I desire to have this honor, and I hope that you will not refuse me this service, especially since my request is made in time, a year and a half, and even two years, in advance. My diocese is, moreover, near Naples.

Perhaps you would not wish to grant me missions for my whole diocese; in this case I request you to give missions at least in four or five of the more important places.

While waiting for an answer, and recommending myself to your prayers, I offer you the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 656.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Advice as to how he should regulate his conduct under difficult circumstances.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 21, 1770.

I have received two letters from your Reverence, and one from Mgr. Borgia.

In regard to Sequino,[1] I approve of your manner of acting; but it seems to me that he should be received, since his vocation has matured so long a time. I beg you, therefore, to reflect on this matter.

As for the letter to Marquis Tanucci [minister to the king], I think that under present circumstances we should not allow ourselves to be heard from in any way, but should remain as quiet as if we were not in the world. Father Maione has written to me from Naples that such is also his opinion, and that the same counsel had been given to him. Let us, therefore, leave it all in the Lord's hands without doing anything ourselves.

I am glad that the President[2] has become more clearly aware of the oppression which the Lord of Iliceto is exercising against us. It has afforded me great consolation to hear that you have had an interview with him, and that he is anxious to take our part whenever the occasion offers itself.

[1] We read in the general catalogue of the Congregation: "September 26, 1770, the priest Don Vincenzo Sequino of Scafati, in the diocese of Nola, was, by a special favor, admitted a second time to the novitiate, but was again dismissed."

[2] Don Baldassare Cito.

I bless you all; let all pray for me.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 657.

To the Same.

Solicitude of the saint for the health of Father Villani.—His charity.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 15, 1770.

I have received your letter.

I am greatly afflicted because of the great poverty of our houses; but I am still more afflicted on account of the bad state of your health. May the will of God be always done!

I think that you should use quinine, and you will afford me pleasure, if you do so as soon as possible, provided the doctors should so advise, as I believe they will. I would ask you to send for the good doctor that lives near the monastery of S. Giorgio; I have forgotten his address.

Let us come to a close.

I have written to Brother Francesco that of the sum, which he received on my college pension [1] and with which he is to pay the printer and bookbinder, he should leave fifty ducats at the disposition of your Reverence. Please write to him what you wish him to do with this sum.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

After the Roman edition.

[1] At this time the College of Doctors (at Naples) was giving to the saint an annual pension of about two hundred ducats (850 frs.); and Brother Francesco Tartaglione collected this sum when due.

LETTER 658.

To Don Matteo Migliore, Parish Priest at S. Maria a Vico.

He urges him to put an end to a public scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 8, 1770.

I regarded it as certain that you had removed this thorn from my side; but I see with regret that you have neglected to do so.

I positively require that by this evening either you or the neighbors should complain to the governor, as we have agreed upon.

This is all that I have to say to you. I give you and your vicar my pastoral blessing.

Your very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] For pity's sake, answer me at once, for I cannot have a moment's rest. In a case of this nature, I believe myself as guilty as if I committed the sins that I could prevent and do not prevent.

After an old copy.

LETTER 659.

To a Professor of the Seminary of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He begs him to submit without murmuring to a diminution of salary.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 16, 1770.

I did not believe that I would displease you by diminishing the salary which the seminary had paid you heretofore. The embarrassment to which the many debts have reduced this establishment, deserved indeed some consideration; and, if to lighten a little its burdens, all the salaries have

been reduced, beginning with the salary of the Superior, yours also had necessarily to be diminished.

None of your colleagues, I hope, will take it amiss that this measure has been adopted; much less should you do so — you on whom by way of compensation, I have conferred a canonicate, precisely on account of your labors. Would to God that the seminary would be in a condition to pay! I would surely not fail to give you your usual salary.

I return you the protest that you have addressed to me, and I give you my pastoral blessing.

Believe me,

Your very affectionate servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 660.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Instructions in regard to the process brought against the Congregation by its adversaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 24, 1770.

I had wished to write to Marquis Tanucci and to Duke Invitto only that they might give us time to be heard. But I believed it better to wait in order to see what will be done to-morrow, Tuesday, at the Chamber. Write to me, therefore, in detail all that happens to-morrow.

I wish also to write to Celano [1] that he should take a lively interest in our affairs at this critical time, and should expose to the ministers the true state of things; otherwise, all his efforts in our behalf will prove useless.

I have also an intention to write to Barracano to stimulate

[1] Don Gaetano Celano, a celebrated advocate, defended the cause of our Congregation.

his zeal. On your part, induce Father Fiocchi to urge Celano to go by all means to see Tanucci; for Celano has influence with this minister, and is better listened to than others are.

Our *friends*,[1] we know, are working underhand. After having advanced against us a thousand falsehoods, with which they have filled the heads of Tanucci and Invitto, they would like to have us condemned on their first charges without any examination. The important thing for us is to obtain a hearing; for then Tanucci and Invitto will be fully enlightened.

I see that the storm is violent. Write to all the houses; I will do the same. Tell them to redouble their prayers and to recite during nine days the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, three times a day at different hours, in order that God may bring us safely through this storm.

Meanwhile, be on your guard not to frighten the Brothers of the Congregation. Brother Paolo has already said that the Congregation was in danger of being disbanded. Such a fear could induce many to leave us, and suggest to others the temptation of leaving us.

Write to me whether Signor Cito has finished the report which he was to make in our favor. Cito is a man who needs watching, as his position allows him to say many things; he can, therefore, be very useful as also very hurtful to us.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] *Gloria Patri!* I have received your second letter, which is very different from the first, and for this reason has very much consoled me. I desired nothing else for the present than that time would be given us to be heard. My plan, therefore, of writing letters to Tanucci and to Invitto has become useless. However, if it would

[1] Thus St. Alphonsus called his adversaries, Maffei and Baron Sarnelli.

be expedient to write, let me know, and I will write. But you must point out to me what I should ask.

I have, however, the intention to write to Mgr. Matteo Testa, that he should speak to Tanucci; he would dissipate the mistrust that this minister may entertain in regard to us; he would make known our miseries and the falsity of the accusations with which we have been charged.

Reflect on this plan; then write to me what Mgr. Testa could say to Tanucci; do not forget to answer me on this point. Mgr. Testa is well disposed towards us and has great influence with Tanucci; by this time, the latter is certainly in possession of the text of the accusations brought against us by our *friends*.

All our efforts for the present should be directed to this point, namely, that our lawyers, and especially Celano, expose the truth of the facts to Signor Invitto; for if Invitto has been gained, all will have been gained. I would indeed write a letter of recommendation to Don Domenico Caravita, uncle of the duke; but I believe that it would be time lost, as Caravita is on the brink of the grave, and Invitto does not care much about his uncle.

I hope that Celano will not give us up; but if you ever discover that he manifests but little zeal for our cause, I should engage a good advocate at Naples, who is well known to Tanucci, and who would be on our side. However, I do not, nor can I think of taking this step, before I have become certain that Celano is neglecting us.

Father Fiocchi is now, I hope, with you; let him not think of returning to Ciorani before he has settled our affairs, or has, at least, left them in a good condition. If it should be necessary, I would have Father Vicar [Andrea Villani] called, as he has more influence with Celano. If I could walk, and if I were not reduced to a skeleton, I would personally go to Naples. The essential thing to do is, to make known the falsity of the accusations brought

against us, and this duty devolves upon the lawyers. It would then be well to have two of them at the debates, in order that if a fact is unknown to one, it will be known to the other. Let us, moreover, take care to give every information to the lawyers.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 661.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

In the trials that afflict the Institute, they should strongly attach themselves to regular observance and to the practice of the virtues of their state.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 30, 1770.

My dearest Brethren in Jesus Christ: You are already aware, I think, of the great storm that is passing over the Congregation, on account of the accusations that our opponents have made against us to his Majesty the king.

I am not afraid of the accusations, because I know that of these we are innocent; but that which makes me afraid is the little religious spirit there is at present in some of our Brethren.

This want of love for poverty would seem to be more tolerable, if our houses had the revenues of the Fathers of the Chartreuse; whereas it is a miracle of divine Providence that each one has even bread enough at table. You know very well the straits in which all our houses are. There is but little love of obedience, little love of fraternal charity; and I hear that there are some that go about complaining, first of one, and then of another.

But that which has given me the greatest pain, is to hear that certain subjects have put themselves forward to preach.

O my God! how will God help us when there is this pride amongst us? This is the first time that I hear of this fault, —to wish to preach! But I ask, what good will come of the sermons of a subject that preaches because he has put himself forward to preach?

I beg you, for the love of God, let me never hear of such a thing again. This is a fault for which a subject deserves to be driven out of the Congregation, or at least to be put in some corner forever, so as never again to be allowed to open his mouth.

Let us remain, I beseech you, united to God; let us not displease him, for we have none but God for us; but if we continue to act in this way, God will abandon us, and will destroy the Congregation: and I greatly fear that this will be the case, if we do not correct ourselves.

Let each look to himself, and endeavor to amend; and if any one be not pleased with the Congregation and with regular observance, let him, in the name of God, leave. I am much pleased that certain subjects have left the Congregation, because the diseased sheep infect the others. It is of no importance that we are few in number; for God does not wish that we should be numerous, but that we be good and holy.

But I repeat, the storm is now heavy; let each one recommend the Congregation to God. I order the Litany, with the *De profundis*, to be said in the Communities three times a day. We stand in need of prayers, and it is only the Blessed Virgin that can help us. But prayers will be of little avail, if we do not rid ourselves of our faults.

As for me, I am at the end of my course. In my decrepit state, and bedridden as I am, what can I do? It is for you, my children, to keep up the Congregation; and rest assured that, if we conduct ourselves well, God will always help us. The poorer, the more despised, the more persecuted we are, the greater will be the good that we

shall do, and the greater the reward that Jesus Christ will give us in heaven.

I bless you all, one by one, and I pray to God to fill each one of you with his holy love. Let each one pray every day for me; for many times during the day do I pray for each one of you, my children and my Brethren. May Jesus and Mary bless you!

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Watch with great care that the revenues of the houses be looked after by a secular administrator appointed for this purpose.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 662.

To Sister Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

What a Superior should do if her subjects refuse to obey.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 20, 1770.

I have received your very long letter, and in answer I briefly tell you, that you are always obliged to do what you can, both in directing and correcting, even when the religious do not wish to obey; provided you do your duty, it will be the business of those who do not wish to obey, to settle matters with God.

In regard to keeping poultry, Reverend Mother, you would have done well, to prevent in the beginning the introduction of new customs. See whether you cannot now induce them by kindness to remove all that you do not need; what else do you wish to do? We must have patience, and offer all to God; this is what you must tell the Sister that has the care of the garden.

Tell the baron that he should continue to take good care of himself, and should not neglect prayer nor Communion. I do not fail to pray for him and for his brother; I shall above all ask the Lord to give him the patience necessary to bear his infirmity by conforming himself to the divine will. You also should continue to walk on the right road; be faithful to the practice of prayer and of Communion, and offer to God all your sufferings.

I pray for you; do the same for me. I bless you in the name of Jesus and of Mary.

Believe me,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 663.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He asks him for some Fathers for a mission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 4, 1770.

My dear Father, I have received a letter from S. Angelo [a Cupolo] that three Fathers cannot be sent for the little mission at S. Agnese, near this place. Be, therefore, so kind as to send me three from your house on the 21st of this month, so that the mission may last during the Christmas holydays.

I expect a favorable answer, and I will pay for the conveyance. Send, therefore, the three Fathers; do not fail to do so.

I send you two copies of the *Instruction* of the Dominican Father, about which you have spoken to Don Felice.

I have written to Alvido, and I expect an answer.

Pray to God for me. I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 664.

To his Brother, Don Ercole de Liguori.

Solicitude of the saint for the spiritual interests of his brother's family.

[ARIENZO,] December 4, 1770.

For pity's sake, often recall to your mind the advice that I have given to you at other times in regard to the affair of your eternal salvation.

I am happy to see that the children practise the devotions I have recommended to them, and I hope that they wish to become saints.

I have been, and am always, faithful in praying for you, for your children, for all those of your house; and I ask the Lord to preserve you in good health, since you are now necessary to your family.

I am pleased that Don Gaetano [1] is engaged with little Alfonso [2] and celebrates Mass. Tell him to recommend me to Jesus Christ. I do not forget him, nor the others.

Cited by Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xlvii.

1 Don Gaetano de Liguori, a brother of St. Alphonsus. He was a secular priest.

2 "Little Alfonso," son of Don Ercole.

LETTER 665.

To Don Nicola Sapio, Priest of the Oratory at Palermo.

He gives him news about his health, and sends him various works.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 9, 1770.

I have received your esteemed letter, and I am glad to hear that you are well. As for myself, my condition is much better; for I say Mass every day, I take a ride when the weather is fine, and all the time that is free from the care of my diocese, I devote to my ordinary labors.

I do not call to mind what books you have asked of me. You, no doubt, spoke to me of the book I lately composed: *Probable Opinion*, in which I have briefly exposed my system to undeceive those that are prejudiced against me. If then you wish this little work, write to me and I will send it to you at once.

While waiting to be honored with your orders, I ask you not to forget me in your prayers; I will not forget you in mine.

Believe me,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I am now having printed a work which treats of the heresies; it is very fine; but as it is extensive, I do not know whether I shall see it finished.

A better idea has come to my mind. As this occasion of the presence of the Father Capuchin presents itself, I send you four copies of the *Exposition of my System*,[1] four

[1] There is question here of the little work that appeared in 1769, entitled: "Apology for the Moral Theology, taxed with Laxism by

of the little work on *Prayer*, which I have re-published, and one on the "Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ." Please inform me when you have received them.

After an old copy.

LETTER 666.

To Father Massimo Selvaggi, Superior of the Missionaries of S. Maria della Purità, at Naples.

He asks him a second time for missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 3, 1771.

I come to offer you my best wishes for the new year, and to ask a second time your venerable Congregation to evangelize my diocese in the fall of this year. You see, I am beforehand, because I hope that you will not permit other missions to be given before mine.

I told you last year that I would like to have missions through my whole diocese, and they will be numerous; at least I ask that these holy exercises be given in three principal places, that is, at S. Agata, Airola,[1] and Durazzano.

S. Agata and Airola require, however, two missions each; one for the city, the other for the distant hamlets.

I expect this favor from you in order that I may die content; for these missions are very likely the last that I shall procure for my diocese.

I therefore depend on your kindness, and I recommend myself to your prayers.

several as sustaining a Lax Probabilistic System, and notably the Less Probable Opinion."

[1] Father Selvaggi, it appears, could not give the missions at S. Agata and at Airola; they were given by the missionaries of Father Pavone or *of the Conference*, as is proved by the letters of St. Alphonsus, dated November 6, and December 13, 1771.

Please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 667.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Girgenti.

He charges him with offering his respects to the Bishop of Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 14, 1771.

I am glad to see by your letter of last December 18, that you and all your subjects are well and that you are laboring for the glory of God.

Please offer my regards to your much respected prelate,[1] and ask him always to remember me in his prayers, as I always pray for him. I hope that the Lord will deign to hear my prayers; and that he will sanctify that immense diocese.

I leave to you the matter of the reception of Don Biagio Garzia;[2] all that you will do will be well done. I will write to the postulant to have an understanding with you.

[1] Mgr. Antonio Lanza, a Theatine, preconized Bishop of Girgenti, November 20, 1769.

[2] Don Biagio Garzia was born February 19, 1734, at S. Cataldo in the diocese of Girgenti. He was admitted to the novitiate, May 10, 1771, when already a priest, and showed such fervor, that after a trial of six months, he was admitted to profession. He afterwards became an indefatigable missionary, and died at Girgenti with the reputation of being a great servant of God.

Do do not forget to remember me to Jesus Christ. I bless you and all our dear confrères.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 668.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He exhorts them to avoid every fault, and carefully to practise the virtues of the religious state.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa!

ARIENZO, February 26, 1771.

(This letter shall be read in Chapter, when all, or nearly all the Fathers, the Students, and the Brothers of the Congregation are assembled.)

You are already aware, my dearest Brethren, that within a short time God has called into eternity more than one of our companions; you also know how much the Congregation is persecuted: nevertheless, this would, in no way, make me afraid. What would make me far more afraid would be to see many amongst us with little religious spirit and with many faults. St. Philip Neri used to say that ten holy missionaries would be sufficient to convert the whole world.

I hear that, by the grace of God, our missions, wherever they are given, do wonders. It is commonly said, in those places where we have given missions for the first time, that there have never been such missions. But, at the same time, I have experienced very great pain in hearing that a subject has endeavored in the mission to have assigned to him this or that exercise, for which he was not appointed by obedience. I do not know what success he can expect from his sermons, instructions, or other exercises; for God

does not give his aid to works that are undertaken through pride. St. Augustine says: *Erigis te, Deus fugit a te.* [When thou dost exalt thyself, God fleeth from thee.]

Be on your guard, my children and my Brethren, against this pride, which would make you put yourselves forward, and desire to be appointed for some particular exercise that you would like, either on missions or at home. The exercise that is the most pleasing to God is that which is given by the Superior, without our having asked for it. Pride, perhaps—nay, certainly—has driven more than one out of the Congregation,—pride and the desire of liberty; and thus many are out of the Congregation, who assuredly will never enjoy true peace in this life; for peace is the gift of God, and God does not give it to religious that have rebelled against the light, and that have wilfully lost their vocation. And when death comes, their stings of conscience will be yet more painful in dying, through their own choice, out of the Congregation, after having once belonged to it.

Some have made me laugh, by saying: *But I do not enjoy good health in the Congregation;* just as if, by entering the Congregation, one acquired the gift of immortality and exemption from all illness. We must die, and before we die we must suffer various diseases. And the chief end that one should have in entering the Congregation, should it not be to please God, and to die a good death, by dying in the Congregation?—a grace that so many of our good brethren have already obtained, who are now in eternity, and who are all, I am certain, thanking Almighty God for having allowed them to die in the Congregation. And, therefore, my Brethren, when sickness comes, let us embrace it as coming from the hands of God; and let us not give ear to the devil, who, when he sees a brother sick, begins to tempt him against his vocation.

Be also on your guard, my Brethren, against habitual faults. He that commits a fault, and then detests it, suffers

no loss; but he that does not abhor his fault, but defends and excuses himself, is almost lost, and will find no peace either in his meditation or in Communion. And after such a fault, the devil at once tempts him against his vocation.

Be attentive, likewise, with regard to humility and obedience to the Rules and Superiors, if you wish to please God, and to enjoy that peace which is the portion of those that are obedient.

Let us always strengthen ourselves with prayer, meditation, the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and always, always, always; otherwise all our good purposes and promises will come to nothing. For this reason I recommend that, for the most part, the meditation should be made from my books: *The Preparation for Death*, *Meditations on the Passion*, *Darts of Fire*, which are in the *Way of Salvation;* and *Meditations for Advent*, up to the *Octave of the Epiphany*. I say this, not in order to put forward my own poor books, but because these meditations are made up of devout affections; and, what is of more importance, they are full of holy prayers, of which I do not find many in other books. And hence I beg that the second part of the Meditation, consisting of affections and prayers, be always read.

I am always praying for you, my Brethren, and do you also pray for me; and I give to each one of you in particular the obedience to recommend me, in a special manner, to Jesus Christ, that he may grant me a good death; to which, both by reason of my infirmities and of my age, I am drawing nigh. I am already seventy-five years old, and am nearly seventy-six. I hope to save my soul, and I hope, in the next world, to treat with God on the affairs of the Congregation. [*Spero nell' altra vita di negoziare con Dio per la Congregazione.*] But I say to each one that despises the advice that I have here written, that at the day of judgment he will have me for his first

accuser before the tribunal of Jesus Christ; for I have never ceased to warn the subjects of these very same things; and, nevertheless, I have seen many that have turned their backs upon Almighty God, and have left the Congregation. I wait for them all on the day of judgment.

I bless you all in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and of Mary.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 669.

To Father Bartolomeo Corrado,[1] at Naples.

He desires to know the complaints made against the Congregation.

[ARIENZO, March 1771.]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Father Maione writes to me that Signor Marchiselli [2] has sent in his report; but of this report he says nothing, except that it maintains that we are forbidden to have a public chapel; but this prohibition is not true.

I would like to know in detail all the assertions of Marchiselli; please then, dear Father, send me a synopsis of this report, if Father Maione has it in his possession; and if it is Signor Celano who has it, call upon him and take notes from it. Then come at once to see me to communicate to me the chief points of accusation against us.

Have the goodness to do this promptly, and come to me

[1] Father Bartolomeo Corrado was born February 24, 1733, made his profession at Pagani, November 12, 1760, in the hands of St. Alphonsus, and died March 5, 1797.

[2] This Marchiselli seems to have been the lawyer of the adversaries of the Congregation.

without delay to give me all information, and to tell me what Signor Celano thinks. I repeat: after attending to this matter, come at once without going elsewhere.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I had begged Father Maione to have the report copied for me, but if your Reverence is prompt in doing what I have asked you, there will be no need of having the report copied.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 670.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He sends him a copy of a memorial in favor of the Congregation, and begs him to go in search of an influential person.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 21, 1771.

The two memorials did not please me; but I took a part of the first and a part of the second, and out of them I composed another, which I sent to Tanucci with my letter. I addressed another copy to Don Carlo Demarco. May God have it in his keeping!

I developed in a particular manner the remark in Celano's report, which pleases me, namely: "When there is question of revenues assigned for public work, it is only the king to whom it belongs to dispose of them."

I send you a copy of my memorial; but it was hurriedly copied by one that does not know how to write, and the beginning of it is confused. No matter: look to the sense of it, and do not mind the words.

I afterwards wrote a long letter to Mgr. Testa. It is now nearly half past ten o'clock, and since this morning I have

been dictating a mass of letters and memorials. May God bless them! and you, Reverend Father, have prayers said that they may succeed; have the *Salve Regina* recited every evening.

As for Mgr. Testa, you will see that nothing will be done, if one of you does not go to speak to him.

The best thing would be for you to go yourself, if you can, to see Mgr. Testa, for he esteems you more than he does the rest. At least, let Father Fiocchi, Father Maione, or Father Corrado go to him; but I repeat, it would be better for you to go, since, if we once gain the cause, we shall, I hope, be free from trouble in future.

Mgr. Testa has the best intentions; but if he is not urged, if he is not importuned, he will do nothing, notwithstanding his best intentions.

I bless you and all your subjects.

Canon Capasso of Benevento passed through this place this morning; he asked me for two cups of chocolate, one for himself, and the other for his niece. He afterwards called upon Don Felice;[1] then he honored me with a visit. I told him to recommend to God the affair of my resignation of the bishopric.

I have thought of sending to-morrow morning Don Felice to Caserta to see Tanucci; and now I have resolved to do so. He will at the same time speak to the confessor of the king, Mgr. Sanseverino and to Prince della Riccia, to interest them in our favor.

I bless you again.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] Don Felice Verzella, secretary of the saint.

LETTER 671.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He rejoices at the favorable turn the process against the Congregation has taken.—Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 23, 1771.

Let us thank God that we have obtained a *decree;* for if the cause had been referred to the Junta,[1] we should have run singular risks.

I send you a copy of my appeal; thank God that I have an entire duplicate of it. In one respect I regret that you are on a mission.

But one thing I must tell you, my dear Angelo, of the income that is furnished me by the College of Doctors,[2] I have assigned to the Father Vicar one hundred and twenty ducats annually, for the purpose of aiding him to defray incidental expenses of the Congregation. Instead, therefore, of having recourse to me, address yourself to him under all circumstances. It would be useless for you to ask me for anything.

I hoped from what had been told to me, that the college would give me three hundred, or at least, two hundred and fifty ducats every year; but the count having been made, I hardly receive two hundred ducats. Hence I am short at present; for I have drawn on the episcopal funds, and find myself in embarrassments about which it would take too long to write. I will have to borrow money.

If then you have some expenses to incur, you may in future call upon Brother Francesco; he will give you something of the ten ducats which I have assigned monthly to the Father Vicar. But I repeat, do not apply to me any more for money.

1 The Junta of Abuses. 2 See Letter 657, page 386.

As regards the land at Iliceto, I have heard that it is a small matter. Try then to arrange it in the best possible manner; for, as I have written, I depend on the Prince of Castellaneta, in everything that is in accordance with his conscience.

I repeat: Let us thank the Lord that we have obtained a decree. Without doubt, it is well to have this copy legalized; but I fear that that would require much money and much time, for, in order to obtain such a copy, another decree, it seems to me, will be required. On the other hand, when once this decree has been rendered, we have nothing to fear as long as we retain its date; for all such acts are registered. It is, therefore, sufficient if we know the date of the decree, and that it be not lost. *The date is: April 13, 1771.*

I send you my answer to Maria Celeste.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 672.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He begs him to go and find a protector of the Institute.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 28, 1771.

I would ask you, my dear Father Andrea, before returning to Nocera, to pass through Naples and to see Mgr. Testa; for the latter, I suppose, with his usual slowness has not yet spoken to Tanucci; and if he is not urged, he will never speak to him.

If you cannot attend to this matter, at least be so kind as to charge with this duty one of the Fathers who lives at

Naples; but Mgr. Testa would listen to you in preference to any other.

It is true, we have just obtained a decree that carries the cause not before the Junta, but before the Chamber; for this we should be thankful to God. But I would like to see Mgr. Testa have an interview with Tanucci on the subject of our miseries; he would thus dissipate all the prejudices of the Marquis concerning our pretended riches, and he would, moreover, tell him at the price of what labors the Congregation sustains the work of the missions according to the wishes of the Catholic king.

I expect a visit from you after your missions, as you promised me. It is not that I have anything pressing to tell you touching my interior,[1] but it would be well for us to speak about the affairs of the Congregation.

I bless you and I beg you to offer my regards to Mgr. Borgia if you see him.

When you come, we shall also speak of the missions, especially the mission at S. Agata. The people of this city wish absolutely that the mission should be given by our Fathers, especially by your Reverence.

I bless you and beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] Father Villani was the spiritual director of our saint.

LEETER 673.

To the Superior [1] of the Congregation of the Missionaries at Naples, called "of the Conference," or of Father Pavone.

He asks for missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 28, 1771.

I have written to his Eminence, the archbishop,[2] to obtain missionaries for my diocese. I come now to beg you to support my request, that it may meet with favor.

I would like your Fathers to evangelize my whole diocese; but you have, without doubt, received up to the present time many other applications. I have, therefore, written to his Eminence, that I would be satisfied, if I obtained missions for three, or at least, for two important places.

Meanwhile, awaiting the result of your interview with the Cardinal, I depend on your kindness, and beg you to accept the expression of the profound esteem with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

[1] It seems that this Superior was the venerable servant of God, Mariano Arciero. In fact, we read in his Life, written by Don Angelo Antonio Scotti, that in 1768, he was elected the spiritual Father of this apostolic Congregation, and that he exercised the duties of his office till his happy death, which occurred, February 16, 1788.

[2] The Cardinal Antonio Sersale, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 674.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to resume all her exercises of piety, and teaches her some very efficacious practices.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 30, 1771.

I have received your second letter after a long interval, and it consoled me; for, as I did not receive any news from you, I feared some fatal laxity, such as the abandoning of everything and the conforming of yourself to the life of the other religious.

I am happy to know that you have resumed confidence in your relations to the Superior, and that you have begun again to frequent the sacraments. Is it astonishing that during that time you were so tempted and so dry? Let us thank God that nothing worse has occurred. It is certain that, if we withdraw from God, he will withdraw from us; and then temptations and faults will abound.

I do not call spiritual desolation a fault; when in this state a soul is resigned, and does not abandon Communion nor her spiritual exercises, she advances more in perfection, and becomes dearer to God than if she were filled with consolation.

Well! let us take courage. Let us resume all our exercises, particularly Communion, and let us not ask for consolations.

Do not deviate from the counsels of the Abbess; always submit to what she says to you. The Venerable Serafina de Capri used to say: "He that cannot bear anything, will not be able to sanctify himself." When some one mortifies you, keep at least silence, and swallow the dose; after that you will feel great contentment. If, on the contrary, you

are wounded thereby, there will remain in your heart an arrow that will torment you more than any other pain. We should conquer all to gain all, that is to say, in order to obtain this precious treasure, which is God himself.

In your meditations never wander from the Passion of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to meditate upon it often without conceiving a tender love for Jesus Christ, and without desiring to suffer much for this Spouse of blood, who shed all his blood to make himself loved by us.

Now two beautiful feasts of fire are coming—one of the Holy Ghost, the other of the Blessed Sacrament. Ask therefore for fire; not the fire of consolations, but the fire of his holy love, which consists in loving God without consolation; then, although one does not experience sensible sweetness, one yet enjoys the happy peace reserved for those souls that wish only God.

During all the time that you have not written to me I did not fail to recommend you to our Lord according to my habit, and it is my habit to recommend you before all others. I will continue to do so. On your part, do me the same service.

May Jesus crucified inflame you entirely with his holy love!

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 675.

To Father Pietro di Onofrio of the Oratory, at Naples.

He charges him with a commission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 30, 1771.

In compliance with your request, I send you my letter to Cardinal Castelli. In it I inform his Eminence of the novena to the Blessed Virgin, which I began for his recovery. This favor he really deserves, as I know him to be learned and pious.

Be so kind as to write to our common friend, that I do not allow any day to pass without recommending him to God in a special manner with all my other friends; and on certain days I do this even several times. Also tell him that for three years I have been disabled and have been obliged to keep my bed. In fact, I have lost the use of my limbs in consequence of severe rheumatism which has brought me to the brink of the grave. I had then to receive the Viaticum, and have finally been left a cripple. I can take a few steps only when resting on the arms of others. The Lord, however, in his mercy has left my head free.

I recommend myself particularly to your prayers. Do me the charity to ask God to grant me a happy death, for my last hour is not far off, as I am seventy-five years old, nearly seventy-six. On my part, and notwithstanding my unworthiness, I will not fail to pray for you.

Please accept, my Very Reverend Father, the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 676.

To Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Castelli, at Rome.

He offers him his condolence and promises to pray for him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 30, 1771.

After having offered you my condolence on the subject of your malady, I would state, that conformably with your wish, I at once began a novena to the intention of your Eminence, whom I so highly esteem.

I hope soon to hear that, thanks to the intercession of the divine Mother, our Lord has restored you to health [1] for the general good of the Church and for the consolation of all those that love you, among whom I desire to be counted.

I will continue to pray to God for your Eminence, and I beg you to accept the expression of tender and profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, very devoted,
and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved at Rome in the German College.

[1] The Cardinal recovered and lived nine years. Born at Milan, October 4, 1705, he was created Cardinal by Clement XIII., September 24, 1759, and died April 9, 1780.

LETTER 677.

To the Superior of the Congregation of Missionaries, called Missionaries "of the Conference" or of Father Pavone.

He thanks him for having granted him missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 18, 1771.

I thank you for the favor of granting missions for my diocese. I, therefore, expect the Fathers after Christmas, as you have promised. I will renew my request in due time and point out the places where the missions are to be given.

I have written to his Eminence to thank him for the goodness, that he has shown to me on this occasion; please renew my thanks to him when you see him.

I recommend myself to your prayers, and I remain in the sentiments of perfect esteem,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 678.

To Don Michele N.

He compassionates him in his sufferings and points out to him the means of bearing with them.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 4, 1771.

I have received the letter which you have done me the honor to address to me; but I must say, that I do not remember having received another letter from you last Lent. To comply with your wish, I will recommend to God you and your family.

I compassionate you in the trials through which you are

passing; but he that navigates the sea must meet with storms, and our only remedy is to pray without ceasing to the Lord to grant us perfect conformity to his holy will.

Please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 679.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Spiritual counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 10, 1771.

I answer your last letter.

For mercy's sake, do not lend an ear to the devil, who wishes to make you believe that you have lost all fervor. I see from what you write to me that you have not given up the idea of sanctifying yourself. In the spiritual life such vicissitudes always occur.

Now, to come to particulars, do not abandon your usual meditation, and during meditation always sustain yourself by prayer, even though you should be obliged to repeat the same prayer several times.

Do not fail to make your spiritual reading, the visit, and above all Communion with the ordinary thanksgiving; and do all with the higher will to please God, without seeking consolation or alleviation.

When you are betrayed into some fault, repair it at once by an act of love or of contrition; then continue as if nothing had happened.

Conduct yourself towards the Abbess with all possible

respect. When she reproves you, always answer her by some word of humility, as for instance: I will try to be more attentive; I know that I am full of faults; pray to God for me.

If at times you feel more inclined to sensitiveness, try at least to be silent; and do not fail to go from time to time to ask her for some obedience or some counsel, that it may not appear as if you were keeping aloof from her.

Take care, above all, not to lose confidence; this would be the greatest temptation for you. Hope ever against hope, after the example of Abraham.

This is the time of the novena of the Visitation; every day of this novena, and even during the whole of the month of July, pay a special visit to Mary to ask her that you may love Jesus Christ.

Be courageous, and do not forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ. I bless you.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 680.

To Father Villani.

Solicitude of the saint to save a vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 10, 1771.

I alone have read the letter relative to the confrère about whom you have spoken to me. I would regret to see him leave the Congregation, for he is a good young man. If he writes to me, I will answer him in all charity and will encourage him.

In the mean time, if you think it expedient, you may let

him know that you have written to me, and say to him from me, "that he should not be disturbed; that I esteem him as I did before, perhaps even more, and that I will keep the matter secret."

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] This letter had been written, when I received a letter from the Father in question. I will answer him in all charity, as I promised you; but let me know where he is at present, whether he is at Nocera or in another house.

I will send you my letter to Mazarelli; this will be better. Have it sent to his present address.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 681.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

He traces out for her a rule of conduct in order to govern well.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 26, 1771.

By the grace of God I am a little better, and I am thinking of resigning my bishopric. Pray to God that in this matter I may be doing only his holy will. I will depend on my director, and do what he tells me.

You have become Prioress, not by your will, but by the will of God. I do not wish you ever to renounce the charge that has been imposed upon you.

I well know that in the monasteries in which perfect observance does not reign, it is a continual martyrdom to be Superior; but you must have patience.

[1] The letter of the saint was fruitless, since Father Epifanio Mazarelli left the Institute after twelve years of profession.

Apply remedies whenever you can, either by correction or by persuasion. As for correction, it is better that you give it privately, in words full of kindness.

If you cannot do away with all the abuses that exist, oppose at least every new abuse, and do so with all possible firmness; for abuses from being small become great; and once they have entered the house, they remain there.

Preach more by example than by words, and always pray to the Lord to give you the light and the strength of which you stand in need in order to maintain observance; but I repeat, *govern more by kindness than by rigor*, and patiently bear with the disrespect that is shown to you. When anyone fails in this regard, do not make the correction at once, for it would be useless; allow some time to pass, and do so when the Sister is calm. Besides, speak well of all the Sisters.

If there should happen some grave disorder, to which you cannot yourself apply a remedy, have recourse to the bishop or his Vicar-General.

Be careful to have a fervent priest come every year to give a retreat to the religious.

I do not fail to recommend you every day to Jesus Christ; be so kind as to do the same for me. I bless you.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 682.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

His conduct during Sarnelli's process against the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 1, 1771.

In regard to the collection, I recommend secrecy; for if the Capuchins come to hear of it and secure a prohibition against us, they may cause us much annoyance.

As for obtaining a favorable report from the three ministers, it will not be necessary, in my opinion, for the lawyers to meddle in the affair; a simple letter sent by me to each minister with a copy of the decree will suffice.

As I have already told you, our principal care should be to gain the favor of Vargas on whom Invitto depends. I also think that we would do well to begin with Santoro by inducing him not only to support us with Vargas, but to point out to us the means of obtaining a favorable report. I have, therefore, written to Father Fiocchi to set out for Naples; for he is the only one of us in whom Santoro has confidence.

Write to me whether you also have any influence in that quarter; for if Father Fiocchi does not come, you will have to go and treat of the matter with Santoro; and after that either you or Father Fiocchi will carry my letter to Vargas. We are consequently waiting for Father Fiocchi's answer, and then we shall decide what is to be done.

Canelli has had an interview with Don Pasquale Rubini, and he has offered, it appears, to make the affair succeed; but I do not know whether the affair will succeed with Canelli alone and without the aid of Santoro. For the rest, it will always be necessary for us to avail ourselves of the services of Canelli by means of a present.

I beg you once more, consult about all this with Don Pasquale Rubini, but do so secretly, without the interference of the other lawyers.

If afterwards you wish to take counsel of Barracano, do as you think best, but let him keep the secret. At all events, I think that after an interview with Santoro the affair should go on smoothly merely with my letter in which I will enclose a copy of the decree.[1]

When you have spoken to Don Pasquale Rubini, write to me.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in our house at Saint-Trond, Belgium.

LETTER 683.

To a Minister of the King of Naples.[2]

He asks him to favor a petition addressed to the king.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 1, 1771.

Your Excellency: I lately addressed a petition to his Majesty in the name of the Association of missionaries of which I am the director, and I have solicited for ourselves the favor of being allowed to take up collections for the purpose of maintaining the work of the missions.

An ordinance of his Majesty the king, dated 1752, has, it is true, forbidden us every new acquisition; it has only permitted the bishops to be the administrators of revenues before acquired, to give to each one of our subjects a

1 See Letter 671, page 404.

2 He is evidently one of the three ministers mentioned in the preceding letter.

tarì [1] a day, so as to prevent the work from being destroyed.

But the fact is that this revenue, after a deduction is made of the charges connected therewith, scarcely amounts to six hundred ducats a year for the houses in which the king has allowed us to live in common. Hence, in view of the number of our subjects and of that of our lay-brothers who, according to the royal ordinance, are each to receive a *tarì* a day, this revenue will hardly furnish each of our subjects with five grains [2] a day.

I have, therefore, asked his Majesty for permission to collect money outside of the time of the missions, in order to be able to maintain a work so useful, as well as so necessary for the salvation of the people in the country.

I say: *outside of the time of the missions;* for during these holy exercises it has always been forbidden to us to collect money, so as to remove every pretext for saying that we give missions through selfish motives.

But outside of this time, we hope that his Majesty the king will permit us to collect funds, in order to maintain the work of the missions, as permission has already been granted to so many mendicant Orders in the kingdom.

I have heard that his Majesty requests, in his ordinance, the opinion of your Excellency, of Duke Invitto, and of Counsellor Patrizio.

I send you, therefore, enclosed a copy of the ordinance published by the Catholic king in 1752. You will see therein how anxious his Majesty was to have the work maintained. You will also see the conditions laid down by the king. They are as follows: 1. Our Association can no longer acquire new annual revenues. We have observed this point; 2. The revenues before acquired shall be administered by the bishops. This point has also been observed; 3. Of the revenues a *tarì* a day shall be given to

[1] 0.85 fr. [2] 0.21 fr.

each one of our subjects, and the rest shall be distributed among the poor. But, as I have said above, we have not been able to give to each subject five grains a day; 4. This concession shall be valid as long as the work of the missions continues; if the latter is given up, all the revenues shall be distributed among the poor of the places where the property in question is situated.

A favorable report on your Excellency's part will aid us to obtain the subsidy of which I have spoken, and thus to maintain the work of the missions.

Permit me to depend on your kindness, and please to accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your Excellency's very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 684.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

He expresses to him his thanks for services rendered, and he begs him not to give up his charge.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 10, 1771.

I have been looking over my little accounts of books, and have given orders that twenty *carlini* should be given to Brother Daniele.

This Brother has, as it were, kept me alive; for I have had him here for four days to be my cook, my hired cook having been obliged to go to Cava to assist his dying wife. This Brother has rendered me this service with the greatest charity.

I am doubly obliged to you; first, for the books that

you have sent me; then for the good offices for which I am indebted to that Brother. You will please excuse the latter for delaying his return.

I bless you and all your subjects, and beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I have just now heard of your resolution. Drive out of your head, I beg you, this idea of resigning, and do what Don Andrea [Villani] has written to you. The latter has trouble enough; do not, for pity's sake, add to his embarrassments by again speaking of resigning.

Do the will of Father Villani, *which is the will of God.*

I bless you again.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 685.

To Sister Maria Maddalena Desio del Crocifisso,[1] in the Convent of S. Maddalena, at Naples.

In what consists true peace of soul.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 14, 1771.

Your letter has been read to me, and I believe that the only remedy for all your tribulations is to abandon yourself

[1] Mention is made of this good nun in the process of beatification of St. Alphonsus. Father Fabio Buonopane thus expresses himself on this subject: "I also know of another prophecy of the servant of God, and I heard it from the mouth of Sister Maria Maddalena del Crocifisso, religious of the convent of S. Maddalena at Naples. While I was at this house, September 3, of last year (1787), I had with this religious, who was then ill, an interview which I strongly desired, for I was not ignorant of the fact that she had been a penitent of the servant of God before the latter had founded the Congregation; and she also knew several extraordinary facts which happened in the convent.

entirely to the will of God. You should desire neither health nor consolations, and be satisfied with uniting yourself to the divine will. This is the surest pledge of peace which a soul that loves God can find on earth.

In all your desolations repeat, then, without ceasing these words: O my God! I wish only what is pleasing to Thee.

This prayer which you say for yourself you must also say for me by asking God that I may accomplish his holy will. I will ask the same grace for you. I bless you.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

"The sick nun, who was then about seventy years of age, told me that about the year 1753, in the month of August, she had had violent attacks of acute fever, which obliged her to keep her bed even during convalescence. At the beginning of the following year, the servant of God having gone to Naples about some important affairs, she sent word to him that she wished to confer with him about her conscience. He accepted the invitation with his habitual charity, went to the convent, had an interview with the sick nun, and as the latter recommended herself to his prayers with the hope of becoming well (the doctors had not yet given her up), the servant of God answered her frankly: 'Do not think of getting well.' 'How,' rejoined the nun, 'I must not think of getting well?' 'No,' rejoined the servant of God, 'do not think of it; from this bed you are to pass into Paradise.'—Now in the month of last August, it was thirty-four years since this prophecy has been verified; for the sick person has not yet left her bed of sufferings.

"The Sister also told me that, after the departure of the servant of God, she perceived (and other persons that entered the room perceived it also) a sweet and agreeable odor for three consecutive days. The nuns were astonished, and asked the sick nun what perfume she used. 'None,' she replied, and no one else in the house had used any. All then understood, that this sweet odor was an effect of the visit of the servant of God, and that the sick nun would not recover her health; and this really happened." (*Sum.* n. 31, p. 693.)

LETTER 686.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

He wishes him to make an exchange of property.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 28, 1771.

Father Maione writes me, that he has more than once asked you to find for him the valuation of the trees growing on the land adjoining your garden, and of which Castellaneta wishes to become the purchaser. We could then, after deducting the price of these trees, ask for property of the value of the two lots adjoining Tremolito, which are now under litigation. If we do not do this, says Father Maione, the exchange will never be made.

Be, therefore, so kind as to answer Father Maione, and do as he requests you to do; for all that he does, he does with the advice of the lawyers.

I bless you and your subjects, and recommend myself to your prayers and to the prayers of the Community.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 687.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

Spiritual counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 4, 1771.

I thank you for all the sweet things that you have sent me; but I find myself at present so reduced that I can take only a little rice soup prepared with salted butter or vinegar,

and some cooked fruit. I, however, thank God that such is the condition in which I find myself.

I was anxious to receive letters from you; for it is long since you have written to me.

For pity's sake, do not always speak to me about your want of confidence; go on, and let God arrange things; it is enough that you do not abandon the right road.

Continue prayer, spiritual reading, and Communion, without being restrained by the desire of going to confession every time you are to receive Communion. Do not regard yourself as guilty of a grave fault so long as you cannot swear that you have given consent, and receive Communion, notwithstanding the doubts that may arise; I take all that on my conscience. It is the devil who by these fears seeks to make you give up everything.

Go to the Superior at least from time to time, and prepare yourself each time to receive a correction. Although nature may rebel, yet every correction will be of great use to you.

I repeat, go on, and do not stop to examine how you have done things, such as prayer, Communion, etc.; provided you perform these exercises as well as you can, I shall be satisfied.

All that you do without tasting therein any spiritual sweetness seems to you to be all lost: but this is not so; very far from it.

Now that you are enjoying more perfect solitude, render thanks to God; this will procure for you at least the advantage of being farther removed from occasions, and from all noise. In solitude one always finds God—sometimes more sensibly, sometimes less so.

For pity's sake, I repeat, always abandon yourself to the hands of God; he has called you to a more perfect life than that of the other religious; continue your devotions, al-

though you may feel no relish for them; perform them out of obedience, and God will render them profitable, sometimes more, sometimes less. Provided one does not cease walking, one will sooner or later reach the journey's end.

Do not neglect to recommend me always to Jesus Christ, especially during this novena of the Assumption.

May Jesus and Mary fill your soul with holy love! I offer my very sincere respects to your good Superior; tell her that I do not fail to recommend her to God, and tell her also to recommend me especially after holy Communion to Jesus Christ.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in a family at Salerno.

LETTER 688.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Solicitude of the saint for the health of Father Villani, his director.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 10, 1771.

I was glad to learn from your letter of the 8th instant, that your health is better, and I beg you to take care at the present time to re-establish it without occupying yourself with anything else; for your health is more important than all the rest.

I hear of the appearance of the decree and of the report. May God have them in his keeping! We shall be simple spectators, for it is not proper that we should meddle in anything.

As for myself, I am well in spite of my infirmities; I

preached to-day on the Blessed Virgin, and I will also preach to-morrow.

I bless you, my Reverend Father and all your subjects, and recommend myself to your prayers.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 689.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Girgenti.

Affairs at Girgenti. — The Church and the Neapolitan government.—Works of the saint.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 8, 1771.

I received your two letters this morning. I now answer your first question, which is most important.

You have every reason, my dear Father, for not leaving Girgenti in September, and all that you say is very just.

The only support that you have in that diocese is the bishop. Remain, therefore, in peace; the Consultors are only joking. If they again press you to come, answer them that it is not proper for you to leave Girgenti under present circumstances.

It would indeed be a great consolation to see you soon before my death; but the glory of God must have the preference before my own consolation.

If, however, you could be absent from home for a short time in spring without displeasing the bishop, we might arrange it so.

I grant to the novice the dispensation which you desire.[1] As to yourself, my dear Father, you should not resign the charge of Rector, that would not be proper, and if nothing else, it would cause talk. Try then to keep

[1] This novice was the priest Don Biagio Garzia; he was dispensed from six months' novitiate.

yourself informed of everything, and to direct the most important affairs, since we are surrounded by enemies. In matters of great consequence, do nothing without first consulting me.

I see that we cannot put a foot into the library as long as the Canon, the librarian, is there.[1]

Since Father Lauria complains that your absence is injurious to observance, tell him from me, that he should enforce the Rule, as well as he can. In case he finds himself unable to do so, let him threaten to write to me; for we will change the residence of the subject who will not amend.

Thanks be to God, we have now many good young men. My Fathers have not much liking for Girgenti, but I am quite fond of it, for I see the immense good that you do in Sicily for thousands of souls who are much more abandoned than those in the kingdom of Naples.

My *Book of Sermons* is on the point of being set free,[2] but this has not yet been done. As soon as it is published, I will send it to you by one of the ways which you have mentioned.

The zeal with which your bishop [Mgr. Antonio Lanza] is animated for the salvation of souls, inspires me with the greatest esteem for him. Offer him my regards, and tell him, that the zeal which he displays, urges me to pray to God with all my strength, that he may grant him health for

[1] Mgr. Lucchesi had wished to procure for our Fathers a dwelling-place and a modest revenue, by assigning to them the care of the library which he had founded for the episcopal city of Girgenti.

[2] This book which the saint published under the title of "Abridged Sermons for all Sundays of the Year," was on the part of the censor the object of ridiculous severity. "To publish this book" — so wrote St. Alphonsus to his printer at Venice, Giuseppe Remondini, August 1, of this year,—"I created a revolution at Naples, and I wrote so many letters, so many memorials, that I could fill a volume."

the good of his diocese, and that he should also recommend me to Jesus Christ.

During these stormy times we must not hope that the royal authority will confirm any foundation. Let us then confide in the goodness of God, and *let us live without concern.*

You must have felt great pleasure in reading the lax opinions of Tamburini.[1]

Here at Naples, every day, terrible decrees are issued against the poor churches. Peace is near, we always hear people say; but decrees fall as thick as snow-flakes. How much better off you are in Sicily than we at Naples!

My work *on the Heresies* is coming to a successful conclusion. I have finished the historical part, which forms two volumes. I am at present correcting the third volume, in which I refute the most important heresies. This volume has cost me, and will yet cost me, a great deal of work.[2] But, thanks be to God, my head is clear, I feel well and I do not neglect the least thing that concerns my diocese.

I enter this month my seventy-sixth year. Do not forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ every morning at Mass, especially that I may have a good death; for my last hour is not far off.

I bless you and all your subjects.

Brother Alfonso Maria,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

1 Tommaso Tamburini, author of a Moral Theology, was at times too lax in some of his opinions.

2 This work appeared in the following year under the title: "Triumph of the Church, or History and Refutation of the Heresies."

LETTER 690.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He informs him of the reception of a postulant.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 27, 1771.

The priest from Capua, Don Francesco Pastore, came to see me and gave me your note. As, in accordance with your opinion, there is no reason for turning him away, and as he appears to have the best intentions, I have received him. Perhaps he has some resources of his own which will be of use to us.

It is true, he is advanced in age, but he is in good health. I have, therefore, thought of sending him to S. Angelo [a Cupolo] to make his novitiate. I have also made known to him in detail our miseries and the Rules that he would have to observe. We shall see how he will conduct himself.

In your note you speak of another postulant named Marco; but I have not seen him as yet, nor do I know anything about him.

I bless your Reverence and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 691.

To the Same.

He begs him not to send the students to Arienzo.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 1, 1771.

I beg you, my dear Father, not to send me the students; for at the present time I am giving hospitality to several

strangers who have come to spend their vacation in this place; among others to Pasquale Rubini, my lawyer at Naples, and to Don Giulio Selvaggi, not to mention three others.

I inform you of this circumstance, so that you may know how to act.

Pray for me, as I pray for you and for all your subjects. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*Postscript by the hand of the saint.*] I share in your many tribulations, and I pray to God to grant you the necessary strength.

After the original preserved in the treasury of the cathedral church of Monte Cassino.

LETTER 692.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He speaks to him of an agreement relative to a chaplaincy.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 11, 1771.

Be without fear, and do not repeat to me any more that I should appoint the Fathers according to the agreement made with Ciceri; for I have not appointed them and I will not appoint them. I would even say, that if you happen to meet Signor Giulio, you should positively make an arrangement with him; for Don Ercole will do what I tell him. This will serve to keep the door open, and every time that the projects of Ciceri do not suit us, we can always say that Don Ercole did not wish to do anything.[1] You understand.

1 As we have already said (vol. i. of *Letters*, page 526, Letter 312), the Abate Giovanni Alfonso Ciceri, by two acts dated, the one November 3, 1757, the other May 30, 1758, had granted to St. Alphonsus the full right of appointment to a laic chapel. As our

Write to me how it is about the capital of fifteen hundred ducats intended for the celebration of Masses, the rest of the capital being devoted to the support of the missions; and tell me whether I have given my consent in writing, or whether Father Ferrara gave his of his own accord.

In regard to this last fact carefully obtain information and do so as soon as possible; for I remember absolutely nothing about the matter. Write to me, then, without fail, in order that I may know how to guide myself.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 693.

To an Invalid Father.

He grants him a dispensation from his vows and predicts his chastisement.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 13, 1771.

It is with pain that I consent to grant you the dispensation from your vows that you have asked; yet I must tell you that in the Congregation there are different houses,

Congregation could not acquire anything, the saint, after the death of the Abate, transferred his right to his brother Don Ercole, by an act stipulated March 30, 1770. This was, it appears, the occasion of a lawsuit which the heirs of the Abate wished to begin against the Congregation. (See further on, the letter of March 31, 1772.)

The saint had reason to say that his brother would do all that he would tell him; in fact, on October 11, 1775, Don Ercole transferred by a notarial act the patronage of the chaplaincy to his natural heirs, but on condition that the Masses of the chaplaincy, to the number of twenty a month, should be celebrated in the church of the Fathers of the Most Holy Redeemer at Pagani or at Iliceto. The Congregation could thus profit by the donation of the Abate Ciceri.

and that if the air of a house does not agree with a subject, he is sent to another house.

Moreover, great charity is exercised towards the sick, and they are not bound by the observances, as those that are in good health.

After all, when, notwithstanding all the care, all the remedies, and all the charitable attentions, it pleases God to call us to another world, we should remember that we have left the world by coming into the Congregation, in order to die in the house of God, and not in the midst of the world and of our relatives.

However, I send you your dispensation, but I should wish you to remember that after you have left the Congregation, you may have the advantage of entirely recovering your health, but you will find no longer any peace, and you will die in trouble of mind on account of having left the Congregation.[1]

I pray to our Lord to bless you; for I have not myself the courage to bless the one that turns his back on Jesus Christ.

After the Roman edition.

[1] Father Tannoia cites this letter in his "Life of St. Alphonsus," then he adds: "The Father remained obstinate in his design; but at his death, he experienced the truth of the prediction of Alphonsus."

LETTER 694.

To the Superior of the Missionaries, called the Missionaries "of the Conference" or of Father Pavone, at Naples.

He gives him detailed instructions as to the places for which he desires to have missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 6, 1771.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: The time is approaching when, thanks to you, the missions which I have asked for are to begin. Be so kind as to let me know the date; I will then arrange everything.

Permit me to call to your mind the missions that your venerable Congregation is to give in my diocese. They will be numerous since the places are numerous; please let me know at least what missions you can give.

The principal mission will be that at S. Agata; the population of this city is about two thousand four hundred souls. A general retreat is to be given to the clergy, another to the seminarians, and a third to the nuns whose convent has recently been founded. I also ask you for a special retreat for the gentlemen, who are numerous. Experience has, indeed, proved that these special retreats are more useful to them than a general mission.

After the city come the hamlets of S. Agata, which must be evangelized, and the population of which is nearly as great as that of the city. As, however, on account of the distances, the inhabitants cannot make the mission given in the cathedral, a separate mission must be given them. This has always been done and is absolutely necessary in winter.

The second important mission is that of Airola, a city which is more populous than S. Agata, since it numbers nearly three thousand and three hundred souls. There also

a retreat is to be given to the clergy who are numerous; another to a monastery of nuns who will require at least two confessors on account of the large number of subjects. Finally, there is needed more than elsewhere a special retreat for gentlemen of whom there are many.

To the mission at Airola should succeed that of the hamlets of this city. It is to be given at Moiano where there is a church for these hamlets, which together contain more than three thousand souls.

The mission of Airola and of its hamlets should be given before that of S. Agata; for it is impossible to reach this latter city by means of any conveyance and, on the other hand, in my diocese there are few animals for riding. It will then be well to do as we did the last time, namely, the missionaries will go, the first day, to Arienzo. In the morning they will take some refreshment at my house; and in the afternoon the vehicles that have brought them will carry them to Airola, where they are to open the mission. When this city with its hamlets has been evangelized, they will procure animals at Airola, where they can more easily be had, and ride as far as S. Agata.

Then the mission at Frasso could be given. This city contains also a large number of clergy and a convent of nuns. The territory of Frasso has about three thousand souls, even more, and stands greatly in need of a mission. I should, therefore, be very happy if your Congregation would give a mission in this place.

There would yet be other places to evangelize; but I ask at least for these five missions.

You might go to Frasso after the mission given to the hamlets of S. Agata.

It should, however, be known that Frasso is three miles from there, in a mountainous country, where vehicles cannot have access.

Please speak to your companions about this plan, and

tell me afterwards in which places they can give the missions. I will then make arrangements, and procure missions for the remaining districts in another way; for it is my wish that missions should be given throughout my diocese during this season.

I again ask, that when the time comes, the missionaries should come to Arienzo, for I wish to speak to them and to communicate to them various important instructions for the success of the missions.

Be so good as to tell the bearer of this letter the time when he should come for an answer, the result of your deliberations.

I conclude by recommending myself to your prayers and remain,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 695.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

She should depend entirely on God and not seek sensible consolations.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 7, 1771.

As for Don Gaetano, do not think any more of him; to think of him is a temptation to you.

If you had told me in the beginning, that the nun in question was not much of a friend, I would have told you not to think of her. And, when Don Gaetano wished to hear your confession only, to the exclusion of that nun, I would not have counselled such a thing to you, for you

would be continually at war with her; hence the Abbess has acted prudently by counselling you to think no more of such a project.

For my part, I cheerfully advise you to take as your confessor his brother, Don Ignazio, who is also animated by a good spirit. Apply to him as soon as possible. I hope that you will profit much under his direction, and that you will find peace.

I, however, exhort you above all to hope for peace of soul, not from your confessor, but from God alone; for if you put all your confidence in the confessor, God will not permit you to find the peace that you are seeking.

The direction of the confessor should not serve to make you find a sensible peace, but *make you know what God asks of you.* Sometimes the execution of what your confessor will ask of you, will cause you mortal sufferings; his discourses, instead of consoling you, will sometimes become tedious to you. *You should resolve to obey him faithfully, cost what it may, even though you should sweat blood. In this way you will sanctify yourself after the example of the saints.*

Read over this letter several times; for I fear that later on you will write me that you cannot bear with your confessor, and I shall have nothing else to answer you than what I am writing you at present.

Hasten then to ask Don Ignazio, as I have mentioned, and write to me as soon as you have spoken to him. In the mean time I shall pray to God that Don Ignazio may consent to take charge of you, for it may happen that he refuses; I hope not, but I am ignorant of what he will do.

Be fully convinced that sanctity is acquired *only in the midst of thorns and contrarieties;* if you seek it amidst sweetness, you will not find it.

May Jesus Christ fill your heart with his holy love!

Give my kind regards to the Mother Abbess. I recommend

her to God, and I hope that she will render me the same service.

I remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 696.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Girgenti.

He sends him some of his works.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 13, 1771.

After a year and a half of vexations, the court let me know, a few days ago, that I could publish my book of Sermons.[1] I do not know the reason of this long delay.

I, therefore, send you four copies of this work. Give to Monsignor the one with the side title; give another to the Chanter [Don Domenico Spota] from me, and keep the two others for the young men of your house, with the prohibition not to give them to others.

If it ever be necessary to present a copy to any one else, write to me, and I will send it to you; for I have only a few copies, as but a few were printed. At Venice many copies will be printed. Remondini urged me for a long time to give him those sermons, and he has, no doubt, begun to print them. To this Venice edition I have added many things.

I also send you five copies of the little work on "Vocation to the Religious State." I published it expressly for our young men. If, by chance, you meet any one who

[1] *Abridged Sermons for Sundays.*—"An enemy of the saint had denounced this work as containing things that might displease the king." (*Tannoia*, "Life of St. Alphonsus," bk. iii. chap. I.)

seems to you to be called to our Institute, you may give him a copy; I will afterwards send you more copies on demand. Acknowledge the receipt of them, and tell me also how your affairs stand.

The work on *Heresies* is going on well. I have already finished the first two volumes, that is, the historical part; I have only to finish the third volume, which contains the refutation of the fourteen chief heresies. I am now at the ninth heresy.

Thank God, I am still alive; I say Mass and recite the Office; my head, as also my stomach, are in good condition, but I can eat only vegetables and fruit, and cannot walk alone; I need the support of another. I thank God for having permitted me to live to the age of seventy-six.

I bless you, my dear Father, and bless one by one all my brethren. In your prayers ask for me a good death.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 697.

To the Superior of the Missionaries of the Congregation "of the Conference," also called Missionaries of Father Pavone.

He expresses his wishes in regard to two missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 13, 1771.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Don Salvatore Tramontano writes to me in your name that by a decision of his Eminence your Congregation will grant me missions only for two places.

I had asked his Eminence and you, Very Reverend Father, to grant me missions at least for four places; but as

the order of the Cardinal has decided otherwise, I bow my head and can only acquiesce.

I only ask you not to send the Fathers too late; for I desire that these two missions be finished before Lent. Please, therefore, send me ten Fathers, or not less than eight, for the places that are to be evangelized are large and in great spiritual want. These places are the cities of Airola (which is to come first) and of S. Agata.

I believe that I have already written to you that I grant you all the faculties: I grant them *all*, I repeat, *all* without exception. I also send you the petitions which were at once sent by the municipalities.

I recommend myself to your prayers. Believe me,

Your very humble and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I again ask that the Superior of the mission should come to see me before going to Airola, the first scene of his labors. I will give him all the necessary instructions.

After an old copy.

LETTER 698.

To Sister Maria Antonia del Bambino, Prioress of the Monastery at Frasso.

He thanks her for her well-wishes for the festival of Christmas.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 15, 1771.

I received your very dear letter and the box containing most delicious sweetmeats. While thanking you for these gifts, I also express to you my very cordial acknowledgment for your beautifully worded felicitations for the Christmas festival. May this festival be a most happy one

for you and for all the religious of your monastery! May it bring you that abundance of consolations of which you are so worthy!

I pray for you and for all your Sisters; render also to me the same service.

I give you my pastoral blessing, and remain always,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*Postscript of Don Felice Verzella, secretary of the saint.*] Don Felice respectfully thanks you for your kind remembrance, and offers you his best wishes. He knows that the Fathers of the Most Holy Redeemer will give a mission at Frasso. They will come from Ciorani with a certain Father Liguori as Superior; but I do not know their names.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 699.

To Don Ottaviano Rainone, at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He maintains his rights relative to the nomination of the Lenten preacher.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 5, 1772.

Very Honored Sir: The members of the Council [1] have informed me that they intend to appoint every year the Lenten preacher.

This is my answer. In accordance with the information that I have gathered, it was the bishop who formerly always made the appointment; but after an agreement

1 The municipal Council of S. Agata.

concluded between the Council and Mgr. Danza,[1] the making of this choice belonged alternately to these gentlemen and the bishop.

I am, however, an enemy of every kind of litigation, and the very word *litigation* sends a sword through my heart; but these gentlemen should know that if they take upon themselves the regular appointment of the preacher, they will never have a preacher who can hear confessions, for I am very scrupulous in granting this power to any one before I have examined him, and such preachers do not wish to be examined.

Let them do what they please; but for this year I have intrusted the sermons to a good preacher, who is at the same time a good confessor; and these gentlemen have nothing to say in this matter; for, according to the terms of the royal decree, they must present to me a list of these candidates by the end of November, and they have not done so.

Be, therefore, so kind as to send to these gentlemen this answer; because this year I cannot nor should I yield; this being in accordance with the royal decrees.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 700.

To the Superior of the Congregation of Missionaries "of the Conference," also called Missionaries of Father Pavone.

He indicates the order to be followed in several missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 8, 1772.

Very Reverend and Dear Father: I have just heard through Don Salvatore Tramontano that you will send me

[1] Mgr. Flaminio Danza, the immediate predecessor of St. Alphonsus in the See of S. Agata.

twelve missionaries on Wednesday the 13th instant, and that I should point out the places where they should begin.

The following is my view of the matter. The first mission should necessarily be given at Airola; for this place is larger and also more convenient for the journey of the missionaries, since they can reach it by travelling there in a vehicle. To S. Agata, however, no conveyance can be had, since there is no wagon-road over the mountain, which must be crossed. This city also offers another great inconvenience: animals for riding cannot be easily procured. Hence, as I have said, the city of Airola is first to be evangelized; eight Fathers can be employed, and the four others might give the mission in the hamlets containing fifteen hundred souls, and distant at least a mile. After this mission they could proceed to S. Agata, where ten Fathers would be sufficient.

Please then, Very Reverend Father, order the Fathers to come here first, for then I can communicate to them various important matters, very useful to the souls whom they are going to evangelize.

I conclude by wishing you good health. As for myself, I depend entirely on your kindness, and I recommend myself to your prayers.

I remain with profound respect,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I again renew my request relative to Airola. Please send the Fathers first to that place, as it contains three thousand, three hundred and fifty souls, and has a monastery in which there are many nuns, while S. Agata has only twenty-three hundred souls.

After an old copy.

LETTER 701.

To Don Pasquale dell' Acqua, Governor Royal at Durazzano.

He congratulates him on his promotion, although regretting his departure.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 25, 1772.

It is assuredly with pleasure that I see that you are promoted and that justice is done to your eminent merit by his Majesty the king. (May God have him in his keeping!) But on the other hand, I have regretted, and do regret very much, to see you leave my diocese, where you have manifested your zeal, your piety and all your rare qualities, by a good administration of justice.

Go joyously to your post, my dear Don Pasquale; the Lord will come to your assistance, and I will continue, as I have done hitherto, faithfully to remember you in my prayers.

If I can render you any service, tell me in all frankness, and believe in the sincere affection with which I am

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

From the original in possession of the priest, Don Francesco Guerini at Nocera.

LETTER 702.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He makes known to him certain difficulties relative to a lawsuit.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 31, 1772.

In the process of Ciceri,[1] we must absolutely avoid proposing Celano's project; for this would clearly manifest that there is collusion between Don Ercole and myself.

I should like, and I say so in all sincerity, that my name should no more be mentioned before the tribunals; there we are accused of evading the orders of the king, and there the Congregation and I are losing our good name. As for the two means that you propose, I do not know whether they can ever succeed.

You speak, for example, of giving a certain sum to Ciaramella on condition that he abandons the chaplaincy to Don Ercole, and that he claims nothing from the Congregation; but Ciaramella will hardly be satisfied with seven hundred or eight hundred ducats. But who is to give them to him? Neither the Congregation nor I have the intention to do so.

As for the proposal to give to Ciaramella for some time the revenue of the chaplaincy, I think that he would reject it with supreme contempt.

I would rather ask Don Ercole to keep the chaplaincy for ten or twelve years, and afterwards to leave it to Ciaramella on condition that the latter withdraws all his claims to the Congregation. The case is very complicated.

Moreover, it is from Ciaramella that the project of accommodation should come that we might accept it; for if it

[1] See Letter 692, page 431.

comes from us, our adversary will grow more and more obstinate.

I will presently send to Barracano a little box of gingerbreads; I say *little box*, but it is not so very small.

We shall think of the two ounces [1] a little later on, that is, when the process is resumed; for if we act otherwise, it will be necessary again to grease the wheels of the wagon when the case comes before the court. I have already sent Barracano some sweetmeats. It is useless for me to write to him; but tell him from me that his memorial is superb, that it has greatly pleased my Vicar-General for the skill with which it is drawn up.

I have now many debts. The missions of our Fathers will alone cost me one hundred and sixty ducats.

Do not forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ at the holy Sacrifice.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I have arranged the little box in such a way that it might be offered to the highest personage. It contains only what is select, as you may see from the following list:

Simple gingerbreads:	8
Superfine gingerbreads:	4
Queen's biscuits:	4
Lady pies:	4
Total:	20.[2]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Two ounces equal to 25 frs.

[2] This passage may surprise more than one reader; but for this, as well as for other things one must remember the customs of the time and of the country.

LETTER 703.

To the Duke of Maddaloni.

He asks him to finish the dispute relative to the fief of Bagnoli.[1]

ARIENZO, April 18, 1772.

Your Excellency: I have the honor to inform you, that the President of the Chamber, Signor Paoletti, at my request and in concert with Counsellor Porcinari, wishes to clear up the controversy relative to the right of pasturage on the fief of Bagnoli. Proceedings will be taken by examining in their presence the points in litigation, and they will finally give their opinion about the matter. As the coming vacation will give Signor Porcinari the necessary leisure, I would ask your Excellency to induce Signor Giuseppe Mazzachera also to avail himself of this opportunity given him at the examination; for I am most anxious, for the peace of my conscience, that the opinion of these experienced lawyers should put an end to the pending dispute.

Your Excellency, I do not doubt, will bring about the prompt solution of this affair; I shall on my part not neglect to do all that is necessary for this purpose. I rely then on your great kindness, and beg you to accept the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, very devoted,
and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] See Letters 536, 568, 624.

LETTER 704.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

He promises to return to him some books, and gives him news about his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 21, 1772.

As I have to finish, at the cost of incredible labor, my work *on the Heresies*, it has been impossible for me to read the last two volumes of the history. As soon as I have read them, I will send them to you, for I have been informed by letter that they belong to your house. Be, therefore, without anxiety.

By the grace of God I am well, notwithstanding my usual indispositions. I say Mass every morning, and I labor for the glory of God.

I am glad that the disagreement with Prince Castellaneta has come to an end; I hope the same thing will happen in regard to Maffei. May God in his goodness bring this about; from him alone can we expect help.

Pray for me, especially during the holy Mass.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 705.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, in Sicily.

Means to be taken to prevent the suppression of the house at Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 15, 1772.

I answered your letter yesterday.[1] But a thought has come to my mind; before putting it in execution, I wish to consult you.

I would like a cessation of this state of uncertainty, in which you are in the house at Girgenti; for you run the risk of being expelled at once, should another storm arise like the one through which you have just passed. Hence my idea would be to have recourse at Naples to Prince of Camporeale, who is very favorable to me, and who has taken nearly all my spiritual works. As he is the President of the Junta of Sicily, I would try to obtain through him a royal order forbidding your removal from Girgenti (I would present the petition in your name). In this petition I would state that our Fathers have in this city neither house nor church of their own; that the house in which they live as strangers, does not belong to them, and that this public establishment is destined for the ecclesiastics as well as for the seculars of the city and of this vast diocese, who come there to make their retreat. I would furthermore add, that they have no personal revenues, and that their only means of subsistence consists in the assignment to each of them of the alms of two Sicilian *tarì*[2] a day

1 This answer relative to Moral Theology will be found in part ii. (*Special Correspondence*), under date of May 14, 1772.

2 The Sicilian *tarì* is equivalent to 0.40 *centimes*.

(nearly equal to the Neapolitan *tarì*), and that there are five missionaries continually giving missions, either in the city, or in the diocese of Girgenti.

I would finish the petition by asking his Majesty to forbid that you be made to leave Girgenti without a formal order on his part.

I confine myself to this; since for the present it is impossible to hope for a decree which permits you to have your own house and chapel at Girgenti, as we have for the kingdom of Naples. It is clear, moreover, that if an ordinance could be obtained guaranteeing you against expulsion, it would be excellent; for, sustaining God's cause, as you do, to the great profit of souls, it is inevitable that you should continually have enemies and troubles on your hands. You are, moreover, often consulted by your bishop;[1] this again will be a reason why all those who oppose the bishop will be also your enemies, as they will think, that whatever the bishop does, he does under your dictation.

As I have said, this royal ordinance would be useful; but with all that I fear to let Marquis Tanucci know, that you have been at Girgenti for several years, and that you are living there as a Community, with every appearance of being proprietors. I repeat that, notwithstanding all the precautions of which I have spoken above, I fear that Marquis Tanucci may come to know all; for he abhors even the shadow of a new foundation, and if he has hitherto kept quiet, it was perhaps because he knows nothing about this foundation.

The best thing to do would perhaps be as follows: Try to obtain from the viceroy the ordinance in question (I could even, if you think well of it, write to him in your name, for he has always answered very courteously the letters that

[1] Father Blasucci was confessor and theologian of the Bishop of Girgenti.

I formerly addressed to him); ask for it then from the viceroy, or from the Council of Palermo, or at least from a counsellor, if the thing is possible. What I want, is that you procure a decree by virtue of which you can withstand your adversaries in case of persecution, which will not be wanting to you.

Reflect on this plan and tell me what you think of it before God; for in such an affair I do not trust my judgment.

Since the bishop, on whom your sojourn at Girgenti entirely depends, has recourse to you for advice, I would counsel you to have as little intercourse with him as possible. Go to him only when he calls you, or when you must consult him on important matters; for I repeat, all that the bishop does will be ascribed to you, although this may often not be true.

Abstain also from recommending persons to him, otherwise you will render yourself odious; and, in order courteously to guard against being solicited to do this, you might, in my opinion, have the bishop to intimate to you the express prohibition not to offer recommendations. This would be the means of justifying your refusal to all applicants.

Do not say a word to any one about foundations, houses, or revenues belonging to you. Say always that as missionaries you are at the disposition of the bishop, as long as he wishes, and ready to depart if he wishes to send you away, or, if as Superior, I order you to leave Sicily for Naples.

The most serious injury that could be inflicted upon you would certainly be the rumor that you are there without the royal permission; this would be a very serious matter for these times.

To return to my first consideration. If it ever becomes desirable to ask at Naples for a royal decree, it would be

better, I think, for your bishop to address to the king a petition asking for the privilege of lodging in one of his houses, or in some public establishment, some missionaries who at the bishop's expense would give missions in his vast diocese; afterwards through Camporeale we might try to obtain the royal consent for our Fathers explicitly.

Notwithstanding all these precautions, I always fear that I might be the cause of making Marquis Tanucci hear that you are living together at Girgenti; for then the least thing that he would do would be to order you to leave the city within two or three years, and I do not wish with my own hands to bring about the destruction of this house. If the blow comes from God, I shall bow my head, but I do not wish to lament at having been the cause of it.

To conclude. You would only have to examine whether, with the aid of the bishop or of other persons, you could obtain from the viceroy, or from the tribunal of the *monarchia*,[1] some favorable ordinance; for at Naples the least step taken might lead you to the brink of a precipice. The events that have happened at Naples, which I omit to mention for brevity's sake, also increase my fears.

I must now finish this letter; yet tell me all that you think about what I have written. Let us place ourselves in God's hands; he is omnipotent.

In future, I will always adopt the following address: *To Rev. Father D. Pietro Paolo Blasucci, Superior of the missions at Girgenti*, omitting the words *Brother* and *of the Most Holy Redeemer.* We must take all possible precautions.

[1] This tribunal which took cognizance of ecclesiastical causes, had been established at the end of the eleventh century. Suppressed in 1715, it was re-established by a Pontifical Bull in 1728.

I again bless you and all your subjects.

Live Jesus and Mary!

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 706.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Charity of the saint in regard to his old secretary.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 17, 1772.

Don Felice [Verzella], my old secretary, has left me, and he writes that he will send for his furniture.[1]

[1] Although he was separated from our saint, Don Felice Verzella never lost the sentiments of affectionate veneration which he felt for him. The following are the words which he used in speaking of his relations to the Bishop of S. Agata, in the process of beatification:

"I had often heard the venerable servant of God praised in my native city, and his reputation for sanctity was already well known to me, when I personally made his acquaintance, on Holy Saturday of the year, 1752. I had just been ordained priest by Mgr. Giannini, Bishop of Lettere. On my return, as I was passing before the convent of S. Michele at Nocera, where the servant of God lived, I wished to see him. I was introduced into his room, I kissed his hand, and he addressed to me an exhortation that I should fulfil well the duties of the priesthood. I particularly remember the following words which he then said to me: *May God prevent you from ever celebrating Mass in the state of mortal sin! You would fall into a habit of doing so, you would throw aside all fear, and you would infallibly be damned like Judas. Carefully devote yourself to study and to prayer.* He afterwards made me a present of a little work, which he had composed on the *Eternal Truths*, and which I still keep with the greatest devotion.

"Don Alfonso was promoted to the episcopate in 1762, and as I was then making a retreat in the convent of S. Angelo a Cupolo,

He fears, he adds, that our Fathers, especially those at Caposele, will say disparaging things of him, after he has labored so much for the Congregation.

I have answered him, that he should be entirely without fear, and that no one would say a word against him.

I beg you, therefore, to tell all your subjects, especially those at Caposele, that when they are asked why Don Felice has left me, they should answer that they do not know, and should always say that he asked my permission to leave me: this is true.

I have written to Mgr. B. on the subject about which we have spoken. He just now answered me, that that priest is retained by a lawsuit, and cannot come. He proposes to me another approved by him. I have asked him to send the latter immediately.

Tell me whether Father Blasucci has told you about the rude treatment that the Fathers received at Girgenti; a treatment which, however, redounded to their honor, as I mentioned to you in my last letter.

Above all, give me information in regard to your kidney trouble.

several Fathers, particularly Father Girolamo Ferrara, requested me to accept the office of secretary to the servant of God. I accepted the offer and entered upon my charge in the month of July, 1762, when he took possession of the See, and I assisted him in this capacity until 1772. My indispositions, my infirmities, the weakness of my eyesight then obliged me to leave him. During all this space of time, I kept up continual relations with him. I often conversed with him about the affairs of my charge and of the government of the diocese, and I heard his confession every Saturday, except when I was indisposed or absent. The affectionate veneration, which I felt for him, dates from the day on which I kissed his hand for the first time in the house of S. Michele, and it did not diminish the least during the time in which I served him as his secretary."

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 707.

To the Same.

He makes known to him his poverty and rejoices to hear that he is in better health.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[ARIENZO,] May 24. [1772?]

Father Fabio Buonopane asked me this morning for some money for the novitiate. I gave him four ducats, but I have let him know that he should not depend on me for money, especially now that I have contracted debts and the poor consume everything.

I feared, according to a recent letter, that you were still in bed; but I afterwards learnt, that you were at Tramonti giving a retreat. *Gloria Patri!*

I expect you without fail the first moment that you can spare. Take a conveyance. I will pay for it.

I bless you, my Reverend Father, and all your subjects.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 708.

To Sister Maria Giuseppe di Gesù, in the Monastery at Frasso.

Nuns should not read the Bible, especially when translated into the vernacular.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 24, 1772.

I learn from your letter that your brother has sent you a copy of the New Testament translated into Italian by him, and that your director has forbidden you to read it.

While approving the advice of your confessor, I must remark that it is not becoming for women, and especially for religious, to read this kind of books, the more so when they are translated into the vernacular. I counsel you, therefore, to leave them alone, and to obey in everything your director by applying yourself to the reading of the Lives of the saints and spiritual books,—above all, those of Father Rodriguez and of Father Saint-Jure, which are books conducive to sanctity.

I will recommend you and your sister to Jesus Christ; you may be sure of this: but on your part never forget to recommend me also to our Lord; I ask you both in a special manner. I send you my pastoral benediction, and remain always,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] Let me call your attention to an instance mentioned in the Life of your Mother St. Teresa. A young person having presented herself to become a religious, and desiring to take with her the Holy Scripture, the saint told her that she did not receive those that wished to read Holy Scripture. She meant to say that the religious should learn

Holy Scripture from their directors and from the mouth of God's ministers, and should not read it.

After the original in possession of Father Raffaele Buonnano, of the Oratory at Naples.

LETTER 709.

To Don Salvatore Romano,[1] Syndic of Arienzo and Governor of the Church of Ave Gratia Plena.

He recommends to him a young seminarian.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 30, 1772.

I have the honor to inform you that, at the coming Christmas holydays, Don Virgilio Cimino[2] of this district will be ordained priest, and that, therefore, a vacancy in the office of cleric will be created in the church of Ave Gratia Plena.

I would like that he be replaced by the seminarian, Giovanni N., son of Don Tommaso.

This young man deserves to be preferred to all others,

[1] We have said (Letter 591, July 18, 1768) that Don Salvatore Romano was a witness in the process of beatification. Among other things he said: "I have very often spoken to him here (in the city of Arienzo), and I have had much intercourse with him, as chief of this municipality and as governor of the church of Ave Gratia Plena and of the *Rochettine* nuns. Our conversation usually turned on the things of God, on the means to put an end to some sin, some scandal, or even on the alms to be given to the poor."

[2] Don Virgilio Cimino was also a witness in the process of beatification. This is his testimony: "I very well knew the venerable servant of God, Alfonso Maria de Liguori, formerly our bishop. He conferred on me the tonsure, minor Orders, and holy Orders; and a short time after he had ordained me priest, he also granted me the faculty of hearing confessions. When the servant of God chose Arienzo as his place of residence, I became familiar with him; for I was his pro-chancellor in the palace of Arienzo, and during the last year of his government, I was also his secretary."

for you know that on account of his good father's poverty he is destitute of all human help. Be, therefore, so kind as to appoint him at the present time, and to write his appointment on the back of this letter, so that I may give it to him when the time comes.

Permit me to depend on your kindness, and please to accept the expression of sincere esteem with which I have the honor to be, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 710.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He sends him three letters destined for three ministers and relative to the affair at Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 3, 1772.

The information that you have given has induced me to write three letters destined for the three ministers of the Junta of Abuses, with whom I have had some communication.

Here is a summary of them. It is false, notwithstanding the information lodged against us, that we have [at Girgenti] a church and a house belonging to us, and that Mgr. Lucchesi, contrary to the depositions made by Mgr. Gioeni, has turned over to our Fathers the revenues of the works which he has dissolved.[1] Mgr. Lucchesi has simply taken the income of an old legacy destined for the missions, and abandoned by the Capuchins; this he joined to other revenues arising from his own funds, and has given the whole to the house of the missionaries at Girgenti, in order that each Father might have every day two Sicilian *tarì* [2]

[1] He had dissolved, it was said, a conservatory destined for poor artists.

[2] 0.80 *centimes*.

during the continuation of the missions ordered by the bishop.

I have given you these details, dear Father, in order that you may be able to mention them to one or the other person who might be of some use to us.

Mgr. Sanseverino, I am told, no longer attends the sessions of the Junta. If he is present at them, he never says anything.

Please have forwarded immediately through Brother Francesco to each of the three ministers the letter that concerns him. You will know how to find each one's address, as I do not know it.

I am very glad that you noted the printing-mistakes in my first volume,[1] and that you will send me a list of them.

I bless you and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved by the Very Reverend J. Spoos, Redemptorist.

LETTER 711.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci.

Accusations brought against the house at Girgenti.—How to proceed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

September 3, 1772.

The following is what I have been able to learn up to the present in regard to the affairs at Girgenti. A counsellor of the Junta of Sicily has said, that the affair had passed from this Junta to the *Junta of Abuses*, and that having asked a minister of this body how the case stands, the latter answered: "To favor the Fathers, Mgr. Lucchesi suppressed certain works which Mgr. Gioeni had estab-

[1] The first volume of the *History and Refutation of the Heresies.*

lished; and these works should be restored." The counsellor said, moreover, that the minister in question did not know what decision had been reached. But I have not been able to find out whether the report of the bishop has arrived at Naples, or whether a decision has been reached.

Enough about this point. Hold for certain that at Naples the parties in question have allowed themselves to be deceived by the anonymous accusations, so that it is believed, that in order to favor the Fathers, the works founded in favor of the members of the conservatory, or of others, have been suppressed. This is, however, altogether false.

If now there be rendered a decision against us, the bishop can freely make known to the king the falsehood of the accusation, and show him that the Fathers have not been favored at the expense of the works left by Mgr. Gioeni, nor that through the Fathers anything has been changed against the wish of this prelate.

I see that the danger is great. Let us then pray and be perfectly resigned to the divine will; but I hope that God will not permit that this work should be destroyed, as it is so useful and so necessary to thousands of souls in this diocese.

It would be well to find out whether the report of the bishop has been really sent to Naples, or whether there has not been sent from Palermo some confused statement which will not make known the truth. But, in spite of all the sentences of extermination that the Junta might pronounce, the bishop (for we cannot appear in the affair) can always say and repeat: "Let the truth of the facts be examined, and if you do not wish to believe me, intrust the examination to a special committee."

I conclude. Pray to God for me, and let us keep ourselves united with the adorable will of God. I bless you and all your subjects.

What I have just written to you, I have stated this morning in three long letters to the three ministers of the *Junta of Abuses*, two of whom are my friends, and the third, Don Stefano Patrizio, is under obligations to me for some favor that I have done him. May God have everything in his keeping!

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 712.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He counsels him prudently to defer the admission of a postulant.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 7, 1772.

Read the enclosed letter. It seems to me that this subject [1] should first make arrangements with his mother and family, and enter only after doing this, so that we may not come into conflict with the court, as a letter has already indicated. This is not a time to become involved in matters of this kind.

If, however, you are of a different opinion, and think fit to receive him, write to me to this effect. But if you think as I do, let him have an understanding with his mother, and then you may receive him.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

After the Roman edition.

[1] This was very likely Don Carlo Fiorentino, of whom mention is also made in the letter of September 26. It is probable that the opposition, which he met with in his family, prevented him from entering the Congregation, as his name is not found in the catalogue of the Congregation.

LETTER 713.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He encourages her in the desolation in which she finds herself.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 13, 1772.

It is a consolation for me to know that you follow, at least exteriorly, as you say, your first plan of life; because seeing in your letters that you complain without ceasing that you have no confidence, I fear that one day you will have the misfortune of abandoning everything.

I am, however, satisfied with the exterior; continue, therefore, Communion, prayer, and spiritual reading, without troubling yourself, because you perform them, as it were, by force, with reluctance and without any devotion. I tell you that I am satisfied with your state; for if you perform these things you do so because it is your wish to do them well; and, in fact, who forces you to do them?

It seems to you that it is so much time lost; but I assure you that this is not the case.

It is true, they are imperfect works; but Jesus Christ in his extreme goodness knows how to reward the least act of a good will.

Preserve in your heart the will to please God, and continue your exercises without afterwards proceeding to examine how you have performed them.

Always depend on the mercy of Jesus Christ and the merits of his Passion, and permit your charitable Master, who died for the love of you, to arrange matters for you.

Do not omit to read, at least once every day, something about the Passion of our Lord, either in my little works or

in some other work. I am at present occupied in writing many interesting reflections on the Passion.

Repeat always: *O my Jesus! Thou art my hope;* and add while addressing the Madonna, *Mary, my Mother, thou must help me!* Then continue your exercises, even when they appear to you altogether useless and lost; our Lord is glad to take them as they are.

In my cold prayers you shall never fail to hold the first place; on your part, however indifferent you may be, do not allow any day to pass without praying for me. I am now suffering terribly from palpitation of the heart, and every night I am in danger of dying suddenly, so much has my sickness increased.

I bless you in the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

I offer my kind regards to the Mother Abbess. I will pray for her, as she requests me to do, but she must not forget me.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 714.

To Don Michele N.

He exhorts him to bear with all his trials like a Christian.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 10, 1772.

Very Honored Sir: I have received your most esteemed favor, and I fully understand what are your sufferings.

I beg you to embrace all your crosses for the love of God; on my part, you may be sure, I will ask our

Lord to console you and to shield you with his paternal protection.

I will also pray for your family.

Please accept, my dear Sir, the expression of my profound esteem.

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 715.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Sentiments of the saint relative to a point of the Rule in which, on account of peculiar circumstances, a mitigation may be allowed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 26, 1772.

Don Carlo Fiorentino came here last evening. I repeated to him what I had already stated to you; and we entered no farther into the subject.

I counselled him to leave his family in the near future and to give as a reason, that he wished to go to another religious house to study his vocation. It will then become manifest whether his relatives are satisfied.

As for the fact of having permitted certain subjects to go home to their families, it was not you, dear Father, whom I wished to blame, but the Rectors of the houses; this is the reason, why I begged you to make them attentive on this point.

For the rest, I well understand, that under certain circumstances, one should grant this permission, and I am sure of your prudence. Act then in this matter as in all

others as you think best. At the present time, prudence, it seems to me, is more necessary than rigor.

I am now expecting you to tell me when your meeting is to take place, and I also expect you will come with another Father; we can then speak to each other at leisure.

In these troubled times every movement appears to me to be more hurtful than useful; we must maintain what we can and await better times. I hear that there are favorable signs of peace. May God grant it!

When you come, I should be happy, if you would be accompanied by Father [Fabrizio] Cimino. This subject can render great services to the Congregation, especially to its government; but he has made himself so odious to all the subjects by his haughty manners, that no one wishes to have anything to do with him. I wish to have a talk with him and to administer a severe reprimand, so that if possible, he may amend, and that in time the Congregation may depend on his services; for he is young and full of talent.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 716.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

He informs him about various things.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 5, 1772.

I send you the four ducats and a half.[1]

I will write to the Father Vicar [Andrea Villani] about the affair of Signor Onofrio. I will likewise write to Nocera

[1] 19.42. frs.

to find out what has been done with the copy of the *History of the Heresies* sent by me to Mgr. di Bovino, and I will also make inquiries of Brother Francesco Tartaglione. Do not be troubled; for if the volume has gone astray, I will have another sent to Monsignor.

Let all recommend me to Jesus Christ in order that I may die a good death.

I bless you and your whole Community.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 717.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He invites him to come to see him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 8, 1772.

I have read your letter alone.

You are right, and I have also noticed that our brethren gave but little proof of a good spirit in making all that noise about my letter; God will, however, furnish a remedy. But I wish to see you to speak about this matter in detail.

I did not mention your name, dear Father; but Father [Francesco] de Paola told me that the affair was agreed between you, and I believed that your Reverence was aware of it. I, moreover, think that, if I had mentioned your Reverence, there would perhaps have been more noise and greater discord.

It will afford me pleasure, if you bring with you Fathers Caione and Maione. As for Father Cimino, let him stay, as he is not the man whom we need just now.

Father Tannoia would like Signor Onofrio Salvo to settle

accounts about the building; for he wishes to begin the plastering. Be so kind as to have this contractor sent for. I believe that, if the latter does not go himself to Iliceto to state his reasons, the affair will never be adjusted.

I bless you and all your subjects, and I expect you.

I have written to Don Gaetano di Geronimo for the retreat in the seminary of Sant' Agata. If he refuses, you will have to send me two Fathers in the month of November.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 718.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Naples.

Instructions relative to the prosecution carried on against the Fathers at Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 15, 1772.

Let us praise and thank Jesus Christ without ceasing for the happy turn affairs have taken.

It is not, therefore, true that the three ministers of the Council have declared themselves against us; moreover, when the Junta of Palermo charged them to make inquiries about our revenues, it was from the bishop that they asked information. Hence it seems to me that at present there is no reason why we should fear. It would then be useless to think of sending in a petition.[1]

As for the accusation relative to our doctrine,[2] no account need be made of it.

I have read the note, and in it I saw with pleasure that it

[1] See Letter 711, page 459.

[2] A certain Canella, a Sicilian priest, accused the members of our Institute of professing lax opinions in Moral Theology.

is the *will of the king* that information should be asked of Mgr. Lanza.

Write then to Mgr. Lanza and ask him to explain clearly the question of the hundred ounces of revenues. These have been bequeathed, says the note of the secretary of the Junta, by Mgr. Gioeni; but this, I think, is a mistake; for they were bequeathed by Mgr. Lucchesi, and given, not to the missionaries, but to the *pious house* founded by Gioeni.[1] They were added to the revenues, left by the latter, on condition that there should be given two Sicilian *tarì* a day to each of the missionaries, only during the time, when they were giving missions at their own expense, in the hamlets of the diocese.

Let Monsignor also clearly explain the affairs of the annual legacy of thirty-four ounces. It was destined for the missions which were to be given by the Capuchins; but the latter renounced this legacy, and Mgr. Lucchesi then assigned it for the benefit of the work of the missions.

He should also throw light on the accusation contained in the note, according to which Mgr. Lucchesi is said to have driven away the poor artists, in order to give all to the Fathers of Mgr. de Liguori. This is a matter of great importance in the eyes of the court.

As to the question of doctrine and to that of a house of which we are said to be the owners, the note does not say a word. Hence the bishop is not charged to give information on these two points. It would then be better, it seems to me, to pass them over in silence in order not to to add fuel to the fire.

Canon Puoti[2] writes to me that Mgr. Testa and Mgr.

[1] Mgr. Gioeni, predecessor of Mgr. Lucchesi, Bishop of Girgenti, had a house built for the Fathers of the Mission; it was called the House for Retreats. The Fathers, however, never took possession of it.

[2] Canon Francesco Paolo Puoti, brother of the Archbishop of Amalfi.

Carracciolo have been appointed members of the Junta. Make inquiries, therefore, for the matter must be presented to Mgr. Carraciolo; and I send you my letter so that he may listen to you. Again inform Mgr. Testa and Mgr. Sanseverino what is the situation of affairs. Finally, it would be well to notify the other members of the Junta, at least Patrizio and Don Gennaro di Ferdinando.

You cannot leave Naples before the matter has been somewhat cleared up. But during the time when your presence at the capital will be useless, come to stay here. At all events, I desire that, before you return to Sicily, you come to remain here fifteen, or at least eight or ten days, for my consolation.

As it is difficult for Father [Sebastiano] de Iacobis to return to Girgenti for some time, see whether it would not be convenient to send two other young Fathers to Sicily; they might help their brethren at Girgenti, or since we have received numerous applications, they might be sent to another diocese.

Pray for me during the holy Sacrifice. I bless you.

Inform the Father Vicar Villani, at least in a few lines, how things are going on.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of Signor Carlo Scierra at Viterbo.

LETTER 719.

To the Same.

Counsel in regard to the affairs of the Fathers at Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 19, 1772.

Tell me, I beg you, how your affairs stand, whether you have received any news from Sicily or from Naples, whether you have spoken to one or the other minister.

Take care to write to Mgr. Pape, if he goes to Palermo, and beg him to give to the members of the Junta in that city some useful explanations in regard to the complaint lodged against us at Naples by Canella, accusing us of illegal acquisition of houses and revenues.

Address yourself then to Mgr. Pape or to another friend, whom you have at Palermo; one or the other Oratorian Father of that city may also aid you by his influence.

I say this only at random; your usual prudence should be your guide.

While waiting for information, which is to come from Sicily, and in order to see what the Junta of the kingdom is going to do, what will be keeping you at Naples? Come and spend some time with me at Arienzo. You will receive a letter from Sicily as promptly here as elsewhere, and on the other hand, I should be happy to see you at my house.

At all events, it is understood that, before returning to Sicily, you must come here to spend a fortnight, or at least eight or ten days.

I wrote to you at the time of your second journey, and you did not answer me.

If you have read the two volumes of Corrado against Patuzzi, send them to me, for I wish to read them; send me at least the volume that you have finished reading.

I conclude by giving you my blessing.

Recommend me in the holy Sacrifice, for I am weighed down with lawsuits and scruples.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 720.

To his Brother Don Ercole de Liguori.

He earnestly recommends to him an important affair.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 26, 1772.

My Dear Brother: I am happy to know that my nephews are at the seminary.[1] I have already written the letter to the Rector; you will only have to see to it that it reaches him.

[1] College of the Nunziatella, at that time under the direction of the Fathers of the Pious Schools, called the *Somasque* Fathers. (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. xlvii.)

We think that we should here reproduce some fragments of letters which have been preserved to us by the historian of St. Alphonsus relative to the education of the nephews of the holy Doctor.

I. "I cannot approve of your project of placing your sons, next November, at the College of the Nobility, because I have not too good an opinion of that establishment. Besides, boys are not fit to enter the college until they are at least ten or twelve years of age. You will then do well to keep them with you, in order to prevent them from imbibing vice in their very infancy; later on, if God so wills, you may think of the college; but I repeat, there is no question of sending them now to a college. I wish to make inquiries, where they may best be placed, so as to become virtuous as well as learned. . . .

II. "Should the college of the Nunziatella be under the direction of the Fathers of the Pious Schools, I should be inclined to have my nephews intrusted to the care of these good priests; for they are especially painstaking from the first in forming the children who are

In regard to the affair of Carmignano, of which I have spoken to you, I regret that you have done nothing.

For pity's sake, do not destroy the long letter that I have addressed to you on this subject, otherwise I will have to write it again. It was Brother Francesco [Tartaglione] who, I know, was in fault by telling you that the affair of Carmignano was settled.

It is true, Don Filippo Caracciolo has ordered that payment should be continued to be made; but these Signori Carmignano have several times made difficulties on this subject. Hence I would need convincing proofs in case they would put off payment still later. At least I should have to place in the archives of S. Agata an exact account of this debt of the Signori Carmignano; for, between you and me, the papers that we have are in great confusion; we should have to examine the affair at Naples and see what part Carmignano possesses of the mills of that city.[1]

The city, it is certain, possesses half of the revenues; but I need to know whether Carmignano owns at present the other half; at least we must inquire of the cashier

confided to them, and thus your sons would make more progress in three or four years, than they would make elsewhere in a much longer time.

III. "The more innocent children are, the more easily may they be corrupted, by frequenting the society of others, especially if these are older than themselves. The malice of but one is enough to cause the ruin of a hundred. Keep them under your own eyes, and God will provide for the rest at the proper time. For your part, have at heart their spiritual good, and Providence will care for their temporal interests, without injury to those of the soul." (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. xlvi.)

1 "There were at Naples, outside of the gate of Capua, many mills fed by the waters that had been conducted at great expense from Sant' Agata de' Goti, through Maddaloni, Cancello, Avella, Marigliano and Licignano." (*Celano*, "Curiosities of the City of Naples.")

of those mills, to find out whether Carmignano exacts half of the revenues.

It would, after all, be sufficient to let me know the name of that cashier; for I would send some one to speak to him; on your part, however, you should invite him to come to see you, and to dispose him to furnish me with the information which I shall ask of him.

This is all that I have to say. I embrace you and I expect from you the service of which I have spoken. Having been several times elected to the office of counsellor, you would enjoy greater consideration than any other.

Your very affectionate brother,

ALFONSO.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 721.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

He asks him to settle amicably a question about interest.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 3, 1772.

I send you, dear Father, the long letter which reached me from Cirignola. Read it and speak to Father Salvatore Novelli,[1] if he is there; and then inform the writer of the result of the interview.

These questions about interest should, it seems to me, be settled in the best possible manner with the house of Novelli; otherwise the signers of the letter will resort to a court of justice, and we must not, after being already so much involved in lawsuits, bring another upon us.

1 Salvatore Novelli was a native of Cirignola (Province of Trani). Born in 1712, he entered the Congregation in 1764, and died in our house at Iliceto, April 7, 1778.

I bless all, and beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 722.

To a Pious Young Man.

He traces out for him a short rule of life.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 3, 1772.

I have read your letter, and I say with your confessor, Go on.

No doubt, one must leave father and mother, when God so wishes; but at present this will of God is not manifest.

Persevere, however, in the thought of making generously this sacrifice when your confessor commands you; but as long as he does not do so, go on, and, with his permission, receive holy Communion as often as you can.

In the afternoon or evening, choose a convenient time for retiring a little from the society of others, think only of God, and read some little book of piety.

When you can (remember only when you can do so) hear Mass, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and go on.

Ask your confessor for permission to communicate oftener, and beg your parents to give you a little time for these Communions, even on working days; but do not remain long in church, for your family might murmur at this, and this would not be well.

In your Communions pray to Jesus Christ for me; I will render the same service for you at holy Mass.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 723.

To the Prioress of the Monastery at Frasso.

He thanks her for the present sent and gives her news about his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 11, 1772.

I have received the box of sweetmeats which you have sent me. I thank you very much, and on this occasion I wish you and your whole Community a series of most happy years, filled as much as you desire with spiritual as well as temporal gifts.

Thank God, I am as usual a cripple. I continue to say Mass every morning; I recite my Office; and, however poor these prayers may be, I will not fail to recommend you to God. I will do the same for the young pupil. How happy is she who thus dies invested with the garment of innocence! I cherish the hope that the Lord will deign to preserve your Community from all further sickness.

Once more, please recommend me to Jesus Christ. I give you my pastoral blessing, and beg you to believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] I send a special blessing to the sick maiden. Tell her that I am praying for her; on her part let her when God calls her to himself, recommend me to the Madonna as soon as she appears in her presence.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 724.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery of Camigliano.

He gives her useful counsels to fulfil well the office of Prioress.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 30, 1772.

I learn from your letter that you have been re-elected Prioress of your monastery for another term of three years.

I pray the Lord to give you the strength that is required for a good and holy government, and I beg you to be most vigilant; for I am told, you always excuse the religious, and represent them as saints when Mgr. Zurlo makes inquiries about them, and do not make known to him any special fault that might give him occasion to reprove the one that deserves it.

If such be the case, it seems to me that you do not act well; for it is necessary that correction should be administered to the guilty ones.

Nevertheless I leave all to your prudence. When you foresee that a correction will give rise to greater disorder, it is better to omit it. I tell you this that you may be prudent.

Pray for me with your Community; I shall do the same for all your Sisters. I bless you.

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 725.

To Father Isidoro Maria Balandini, Abbot of the Monastery of Trappists of Casamari.

He offers him his thanks and begs him to favor a foundation.

ARIENZO, February 14, 1773.

Very Reverend Father: I have just received a letter from Father Francesco de Paola, Superior of the missions which the Fathers of my Congregation are giving in the diocese of Aquino. He tells me with what gentleness and kindness the Prior and the subjects of your much esteemed monastery received the two Fathers charged to examine the place of which there was question. He also informs me of the interviews had with a French priest,[1] to induce him to surrender to my Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer a house that he was building.

I offer to you, Very Reverend Father, and your excellent Community my sincere thanks. If the circumstances are favorable, you would greatly oblige me by using your influence with Monsignor, the Bishop of Veroli, and with the French priest; for it seems to me that the work will procure for God very great glory and to souls immense advantages.

I recommend myself to your prayers and to those of your Fathers, especially as my very advanced age indicates that death is near. Wishing you to believe me entirely at your command, I beg you to accept the expression of profound

1 The name of this French priest was Louis Arnauld. The foundation was made in the same year, July 5, 1773, at Scifelli, near Casamari and the city of Veroli.

and unalterable respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the monastery of the Trappists of Casamari.

LETTER 726.

To the Prince della Riccia.

He adroitly declines a letter of recommendation relative to an ecclesiastical benefice.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 8, 1773.

Your Excellency well knows with what respect I usually acquiesce in your commands.

The priest D. Gennaro Mauro di Moiano, who aspires to the canonicate vacant in my cathedral of S. Agata, has not yet presented the requisite documents to the chancery. When he does this, I will have them promptly transmitted to our Holy Father the Pope. In the meantime this priest should pray to God that his claims may appear in the eyes of the Pope better than those of others.

[1] Father Tannoia thus relates this fact in the "Life of St. Alphonsus" (bk. iii. chap. xxxii.): "A priest of Moiano, who was very eager to be a Canon, had the Princess della Riccia to intercede in his favor for a vacant benefice at the cathedral. Alphonsus received the solicitation, but extricated himself out of it with so much address, that he seemed neither to give nor refuse his consent. He wrote to the prince in these terms..." Tannoia gives the letter, then adds: "Alphonsus sent the request, but not the letter of recommendation, and the pretendant was not made a Canon during the episcopate of his Lordship."

Please accept the expression of profound respect and perfect consideration with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, very devoted,
and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 727.

To Sister Maria Michela del S. Francesco, Carmelite at Ripacandida.

One cannot, without committing a grievous sin, vote for the admission to profession of an unworthy novice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 18, 1773.

I have received your letter, and I have read with much pain that you and your whole Community are so tormented on account of the pupil of whom you speak. It is certain that there can be no peace in a religious house in which there is a worldly-minded person; in such a house there can be only contradictions, troubles, disquietudes, and may God grant that we may not see that sin also reigns there.

My advice, therefore, is that when there is question of voting for the admission of this young person, you do not give her your vote; and this advice you must communicate to all the religious by telling them that I have written to you, and that I assure them that no religious can give her vote in favor of this novice without making herself guilty of a grievous sin of which she cannot be excused.

Make all understand that they should lay aside all human respect by thinking that, if they damn themselves on account of this pupil, her relatives will not come to take them out of hell.

I beg you to bear these troubles and contrarieties for the love of Jesus crucified; think that these pains are nothing in comparison with what Jesus Christ has suffered. Support all this, as you do every other affliction, with patience and in silence, and God will crown you with glory.

I shall recommend you and your whole Community to Jesus Christ, and I beg you also to recommend me. I bless you, and remain, etc.

With your letter I received another. I do not know whether it is from a novice or a pupil. She tells me that she cannot partake of oil or vegetables, nor wear woolen garments, nor go to the Office at night, and she asks my advice about her vocation.

I have answered her, that since she cannot keep the Rule, it is a certain sign that she has no vocation for your monastery. I added that, if she desired to be a religious there, she would be in danger of losing her soul, and that the religious cannot receive her without committing a grievous fault. It is one thing, when infirmity attacks a person that is already a professed religious, and another thing, when this occurs before a person has bound herself by vows.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 728.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Naples.

He exhorts him to devote himself earnestly to the affairs of Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 25, 1773.

I have received your letter, and am happy to know that Mgr. Testa is fully informed. I hope that the confessor of the king [Mgr. Filippo Sanseverino] has also been informed, for the confessor of the queen [Mgr. Antonio

Guetthler], to whom I made a present of my work *on the Heresies*, wrote me very politely. After having said that he had read nearly the whole of my work, he concluded his letter in the following words: "It will also afford me great pleasure to be useful to you in the vicissitudes that afflict your Congregation; and in the course of my conversations with my friends I will strenuously defend it."

I will write to Camporeale [1] when you wish me to do so; to others also, especially to Patrizio.

When the *report* makes its appearance, you must, before all things, give the ministers all the details of the affair; for God has made you come to Naples for this purpose.

Don Gaetano Celano is a good advocate; but I would like you fully to inform the ministers, at least Patrizio and Salomone, especially de Marco.

It is well that the confessor of the queen, and the Prince di Belmonte, give de Marco the explanations that have been furnished them by the bishop; but you will do well, I think, to interview this minister personally. Those of whom I have spoken are, no doubt, persons of authority; but they cannot, as you can, give explanations which should necessarily be given.

Canon Malizia has promised me to arrange for you at his house a private interview with de Marco, and Malizia is very much in the good graces of de Marco.

Many months have elapsed since I asked you to call upon Malizia and through him to communicate with de Marco; but this, it seems to me, did not please you, and I do not know why.

I again beg you to do so; for de Marco is favorable to us, and he can surely be of great service to us. What do you expect of Belmonte and of the queen's confessor? A word in passing, and that is all.

[1] Counsellor of State.

I do not understand this phrase of your letter: *Let us not show ourselves, lest we be suspected.* What! let us not show ourselves! when we are accused of having acquired a house and revenues without the royal assent!

Have patience! Call upon Malizia and de Marco. This will be the fifth or sixth time that I have recommended this to you.

I am glad that you are giving the retreat at Sorrento,[1] but in future refuse this kind of work, and do not promise anything without my permission. *Attend only to the affairs of Girgenti.*

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO.

[*P. S.*] I have read the report of the bishop [Mgr. Lanza, Bishop of Girgenti]. It is well written, but more ample explanations must be given to the ministers and to de Marco. On my part, I recommend to God without ceasing the affairs of Girgenti.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Father Blasucci had written to the saint on March 21: "I am obliged to remain eight days at Sorrento with Father Corrado, in order to give a retreat there; for we promised it to the archbishop, and he was inexorable. I have now a little free time before the appearance of the report of the viceroy and its return to the Junta of Sicily, etc."

LETTER 729.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.[1]

Foundation of the house at Scifelli.—Behavior towards the principal benefactor.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 28, 1773.

I felt great consolation when I heard through Father Andrea [Villani] that the foundation of S. Cecilia had been concluded.

[1] Father Francesco Antonio de Paola was born at Ruvo, in the diocese of Muro, October 2, 1737. From his youth, encouraged above all by his two cousins, Domenico and Pietro Paolo Blasucci, he conceived the desire of entering our Congregation. After having overcome the opposition of his family, he took the habit of the Institute, June 21, 1755; a year later he made profession in the hands of his Father Master, Antonio Tannoia. Having finished his course of studies and, as he had as much zeal as talent, he was employed in giving missions. One may judge by the following fact of the esteem which St. Alphousus had for him: In 1765, among the different Fathers proposed for the office of Master of novices, the saint looked upon de Paola as one of the most able (see Letter 478, page 128); and in 1767 he appointed him Rector of S. Angelo a Cupolo.

An entire volume would not suffice to describe all the apostolic labors of this indefatigable missionary. His special vocation was, moreover, to extend the Congregation beyond the limits of the kingdom of Naples. In 1773, he founded the house at Scifelli, and three years afterwards, that of Frosinone, both situated in the Romagna, diocese of Veroli. In 1780, the Neapolitan government having substituted for the Rule approved by Benedict XIV., new regulations (*Regolamento*) which destroyed, or nearly so, the essence of our Institute, the Holy See separated from the houses at Naples the four houses founded in the Pontifical States; namely: S. Angelo a Cupolo, Scifelli, Benevento, and Frosinone, giving them Father de Paola, first, as President, then as Rector Major. The latter, faithful to his trust, founded four other houses, namely: at Gubbio, at Spello, at Rome, and at Cisterna. But one of his most

I have written a letter of thanks to the Bishop of Veroli [Mgr. Giovanni Battista Iacobini], and also begged him to continue to be favorable to the work. I have also written another letter thanking Abbè Arnauld,[1] to whom, indeed, we are under great obligations.

Father Andrea tells me that this priest is of an *inconstant* character; your Reverence, who has done so much should, therefore, use towards him all possible prudence and circumspection; and I recommend the same thing to the others.

beautiful titles to glory is to have admitted into the Congregation the Blessed Clement Mary Hofbauer, who was later an illustrious propagator of our Institute.

In 1792, the Neapolitan government having ceased to occupy itself with our Rules, Father de Paola, in the General Chapter held at Pagani, resigned the office of Rector Major. He had for his successor Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, who thus became the head of the whole Congregation.

From this time till his death, Father de Paola resided nearly always at Frosinone, and at the time of the French invasion rendered to this city important services.

The last days of Father de Paola were embittered by great trials, the narration of which would pass the limits of a simple notice. He always professed a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and composed in her honor a learned work entitled, "The Grandeurs of Mary."

He died September 7, 1814, assisted at his last moments by Father Sebastiano Perciballi. His body rests in our church at Frosinone before the high altar.

1 Louis Arnauld was a native of the diocese of Avignon. During a journey, which he made to Italy, he entered the Order of Trappists at Casamari; but his bad health obliged him soon to leave it. Ordained priest by the Bishop of Veroli, he built with his own means in a village named Scifelli a little church dedicated to S. Cecilia in remembrance of the church in his native place. He himself officiated at this church, and took care of the spiritual wants of the poor people. At the request of the Fathers at Casamari, he gave up to our Congregation the little church and the house adjoining. This house was greatly enlarged, and the convent later on received the name of *S. Maria del Buono Consiglio.*

Endeavor not to displease him in things that are not positively against the good order of the house, particularly in regard to things temporal; we must yield for the sake of peace and expediency. He has been very kind to us; we should manifest to him our esteem, and conform to his views as much as we can. You and your companions will not be wanting, I trust, in the necessary prudence and virtue as to the manner in which you must behave towards him and bear with him.

Finally, out of regard for God and your neighbor, I recommend to you regular observance at the beginning of this foundation.

Try to find out whether there is a sure way of receiving letters by post, and in this case, to which place and to which trustworthy person they may be addressed; or whether it will be necessary to employ a carrier of Rome or a special courier to forward anything to you. You will tell me all this, when you come to see me; for I am really astonished, that neither Father Andrea nor Father Caione has thought of this.

I bless you and all.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 730.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

Severity of the saint in regard to obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 5, 1773.

Reverend Father: I learn that the Father Vicar has written to you positively to send Brother Antonio [Maria Oliva] to S. Angelo [a Cupolo] in order that the latter

might call for Brother Stefano, both having been destined for the new house at Veroli [Scifelli], that you, however, it appears, answered through Father Ansalone that you could not, or rather that you did not wish to send him.

You know, my dear Father Antonio, that I esteem you; but now I must speak to you plainly. You have been accused of being wanting in obedience to the orders of the Superiors. This fact discloses to me one of the principal reasons why the Congregation is at present in so trying a condition, namely, the Rectors are the first to fail in obedience.

I have been appointed, both by the Pope and by the king, Director of the Congregation. From this day forward, I intend to change my style; I wish to be obeyed; he that desires to go away, let him go away; he that wishes to stay, let him stay. God needs no one, and he loves only those subjects that are good and obedient.

Send, therefore, without fail the said Brother Antonio, and beware of allowing any interference on the part of the bishop [Mgr. Tommaso Pacelli, Bishop of Bovino] who is now with you. Even if the latter wishes to use his influence to retain the Brother, you must do all in your power to make him give up the idea.

And do not answer me that you have not succeeded in your efforts; for if you do not send the Brother, you will be responsible to me, and will have to repent of this neglect; but I hope you will not give me this pain.

Tell the Fathers of your house from me that they must attend to the practice of obedience; I have resolved, moreover, in a little while, to write to all the houses on this subject.

It is my intention to dismiss any one that refuses to obey, even if it were my own brother. Let no one think of invoking the aid of the court; for the king, who has

appointed me Director, and is very favorable to me, will listen to me rather than to others. Tell this to all your Fathers.

I bless you and all your Fathers.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in our house at Pagani.

LETTER 731.

To Father Francesco de Paola.

Recommendations in regard to the new house at Scifelli.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 14, 1773.

When I wrote to the Bishop of Veroli to thank him for the foundation made a little while ago, I forgot to ask him to notify the Pope in order to obtain his approbation and his consent, and thus render the work more secure.

Do not, therefore, omit to ask him for this new favor, when you bring him the letter that I have addressed to him. If this has already been done, you will please to thank him in my name.

Hence see to it that, either this favor be asked in my name, or, if this has already been done, that my thanks be expressed to the bishop.

I have written you a letter that you may perhaps receive with this. I recommend to you anew all that it contains. I count on your prudence, both to avoid displeasing Signor Arnauld, and to watch over the exact observance of the Rule by all the Fathers and Brothers of this new house.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

I send you for your house through the Brothers Stefano and Antonio Maria [1] a copy of the *Homo Apostolicus*, a

[1] Brother Antonio Maria Oliva died the death of the just, after two years' sojourn in the house at Scifelli. His high reputation

copy of my *Sermons*, a copy of *Father Rodriguez* and a copy of the *Preparation for Death.*

I add a second copy of the *Sermons.* Give it in my name to Don Arsenio, the Prior or Sub-prior of Casamari, who has been of so great help to us in this foundation; express to him my thanks.

I bless you and all your subjects. I salute Monsieur l'abbè Arnauld.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] The secretary kisses your hand; hé salutes and embraces all *in Domino* [in the Lord].—Monsignor made me open this letter after it had been already sealed, and the seal had become dry. He wishes me to add that you should allow Monsieur l'abbè Arnauld all that can be allowed. Do all this, so that he may not have any reason to complain. Monsignor again blesses you.

After an old copy.

for sanctity was the reason why his portrait was painted on canvas, at the bottom of which were written the following words: *Frater Antonius Maria Oliva, Pompeianensis, Congregationis SS. Redemptoris, virtutis amans, Dei et proximi amore flagravit, pro infirmis, pauperibus sollicitus, quique obedientia clarus, patientia insignis, sibi vilis, omnibus charus, Verulis in hoc Sanctæ Cœciliæ oppidulo, die* 22 *Junii* 1755, *in Crucifixi amplexu lætanter obiit, ætatis suæ anno xlv.* — (Brother Antonio Maria Oliva, of Pompei, member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, distinguished himself by his virtues, by his ardent love for God and for his neighbor, by his charity towards the poor and the sick. A model of obedience and of patience, vile in his own eyes, but dear to every one, he died joyfully, June 22, 1775, in this house of St. Cecilia at Veroli, while devoutly kissing the crucifix. He was forty-five years old.)—This picture and inscription are still found in our house at Scifelli.

LETTER 732.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He recommends to them the practice of religious virtues and protests that he wishes to keep only those that are observant of the Rule.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 27, 1773.

My Brethren and my Children: I write this time to you with tears in my eyes, because I hear that some of you do not live up to the end for which God has called them into this our little Congregation, but allow themselves to be carried away by the spirit of pride and of disunion.

God does not reign in those hearts in which Christian humility, fraternal charity, and peace do not reign. Our want of correspondence to the grace of God makes me more afraid than the fiercest persecutions of men and of devils. In these God protects us, when we live according to his heart and his most holy will. We can then say: *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?* [If God be for us, who is against us?] But if we do not behave well towards God, instead of protecting us, he will chastise us.

I am sad enough when I hear that one of our young subjects is not living according to the perfection that is proper to an evangelical laborer; but I am far more hurt, and my heart is full of sorrow, when I hear that some of the older Fathers and Brothers, who have been longer in our Congregation, and who should be models of edification and virtue to the younger and more recently professed, have but little esteem for the obedience that is due to the Superior.

I have always recommended to all, both by word and by

letter, holy obedience and submission to Superiors, who are in the place of God upon earth: on this depends good order, the glory of God, the success of the missions, and our peace of mind; for he that punctually obeys is sure of doing in all things the will of God, in which alone is to be found true peace. But notwithstanding this, the devil has tempted, and is tempting, some of our subjects to make little account of obedience; and hence they themselves are unquiet, and they disturb their companions and their Superiors under far-fetched pretences, which the enemy of their salvation makes them believe to be the effects and proofs of zeal, of a praiseworthy spirit, of a desire to reform abuses, and of a love of justice and truth.

Wonderful indeed! Such as these amongst us speak of reform and of zeal; but then they do not think of first reforming themselves and their own lives, which are more imperfect than those of others. He that has true zeal, and is working for God, will do nothing more than acquaint me, or the Vicar-General who governs in my place, with the defects of regular observance which he remarks in the house to which he is attached; and having done this, he remains quiet, and recommends the matter to God. But to become unquiet, to form parties, to talk and write without regard to charity, to take up the matter one's self, and to wish to get the upper hand, this is not the spirit of God, this is not zeal, but an abominable spirit of pride, of disorder, and of passion, and is a blindness all the more incurable, the more it is supposed to proceed from the light of truth and from straightforwardness of mind, which with difficulty endures that which is not in order.

Understand well, my Brethren and children in Jesus Christ, God wills of you obedience and respectful submission to Superiors more than a hundred sacrifices and a thousand brilliant works undertaken for his glory.

God wills us to be poor, and to be content in poverty;

and we ought to thank him when, through his mercy, we find a crust of bread on the table, and when we are not in want of that which is strictly necessary.

He that is not pleased to live among us poor people, with poor clothes and poor food, may leave the Congregation without troubling us, and may go and live at his own home as he pleases; for I am quite ready to give him his dismissal, as God does not wish to have in the house discontented servants, who serve him by force and in continual disturbance.

Let every one banish from his head that worldly pride of wishing to rival others, and to do better than others; and this even in preaching the word of God.

I absolutely will not permit the use of that refined style of preaching with rounded sentences and fine expressions, which are the pest of sermons. In this way would be lost, little by little, that familiar and simple manner of preaching by means of which our missions have, through God's mercy, worked prodigies in the conversion of souls, in all those places where they have been given in the proper way, and according to God.

Even when preaching upon some saint, we must adopt the same familiar and simple style in praising the virtues of the saint, and we must endeavor to draw from the subject certain moral reflections that may be profitable for the people; but the sermon must be composed and delivered always with the same simplicity of manner, without a pompous tone, and without high-sounding and far-fetched words.

We ought to preach, not ourselves indeed, but Christ crucified, his glory, and not our own vanity.

I pray Almighty God to chastise those that preach with vanity, that they may learn how to preach; and I trust that my prayer will be heard.

I say to all in general, that whosoever is not contented to

live in our Congregation, may with all freedom ask me to be allowed to leave us, and to live at his own home. I will most readily give him this permission, as I have no desire to keep people in the service of God by force. Few and good subjects are preferable to many that are proud and unquiet.

Moreover, if subjects such as these are not willing of themselves to ask for their dismissal, under some honorable pretext, but, on the contrary, are determined to go on living in the same disobedience and imperfections, and with little edification to their companions and to the people in the missions, in this case I declare before you all, that I will find a way of making them leave our Congregation in a more unpleasant manner, and with less advantage to themselves.

Inasmuch as I have in view the glory of God alone and the work of the missions, which his Majesty the king desires should be maintained in its primitive fervor, for the good of the souls of his subjects, I shall have no human respect or fear for the threats of certain cross-grained individuals, who have not the spirit of God. If they begin to write, I also have pen and ink. It is my duty to fulfil the intentions of God and of the king by keeping those subjects that are fit for maintaining the work of the missions, and by sending those away that are found to be useless, and even hurtful for this work. I am the sole Director of this Society of Missionary Priests; and this, too, is the wish of our sovereign.[1] I have no doubt that he will more

[1] In order to form a just idea of the motives that induced St. Alphonsus to speak thus, we must transport ourselves to the places and to the exceptional circumstances under which the Congregation then existed. It had, it is true, been approved by the Church; but it was not recognized in the kingdom of Naples, and the holy Founder, although named by the Pope Rector Major of the Institute, was in the eyes of the Neapolitan government merely the head and the director of some missionary Fathers, authorized to live together

willingly listen to my truthful representations than to the appeals of the intractable and discontented.

He that wishes to remain with us must make up his mind to obey, and not to trouble the houses to which he is or may be attached, because I am resolved no longer to tolerate those subjects who, by their unedifying lives, bring discredit on the work of the missions, and who do no good to themselves or to others.

I love each one of you, my Brethren, more than a brother according to the flesh; and when any one leaves our Congregation, I experience an unspeakable pain; but when I see that the wound has become gangrened, and that caustic is necessary, I must apply it, however much pain it may cost me to do so.

Almighty God preserves my life, notwithstanding my extreme old age, in order that I may remedy the disorders that threaten the work of the missions; and I am determined to remedy them, cost what it may.

I am not afraid even if the greater number leave us. He that remains, remains. God has no need of numbers; it is sufficient if a few good subjects remain. These few will do more good than all the other imperfect, proud, and disobedient subjects.

I have already given notice, and I do so again to all, that with regard to the younger subjects that are not yet priests, I wish to be informed when there is question of their receiving one of the holy Orders, and I will not allow them to be ordained until I have carefully inquired

by a decree of Charles III. To avoid difficulties that might arise on the part of the government into the hands of which this letter might fall, St. Alphonsus does not here make mention of the Pope; he speaks only of the king, and he calls himself the sole Director of the Society of Missionaries. *There is*, says the Holy Ghost, *a time for speaking and a time for keeping silence.* (Note by Cardinal Villecourt.)

into their conduct. I hope never to give the slightest displeasure to God; and, therefore, I beg each and all of you to write and tell me sincerely the faults that you may have remarked in any one of our young men that is to be ordained; and this even though I should not have written to you for information.

The younger Fathers must understand that I will not on any account allow them to go on missions before they are thirty years of age; and when, by reason of some necessity, a dispensation from this regulation is needed, I wish to be informed.

I recommend to each one the observance of those praiseworthy acts that are practised among us for maintaining piety and holiness of life.

I recommend obedience to Superiors, the love of Jesus Christ, devotion to his Passion, meditation, the annual ten days' and the customary monthly retreat. He that loves Jesus Christ is obedient, is resigned under all circumstances, and is always quiet.

I will later on send regulations for the good order of the missions; I wish them to be punctually observed and I will exact an account whether they are observed.

I hereby notify you that I have thought it well to appoint as Rector of the house of S. Michele dei Pagani Father Giovanni Mazzini; as Consultors I have given him Father Alessandro de Meo and Father Vitantonio Papa; and as Admonitor Father Domenico Corsano.

I conclude, as I began, with tears in my eyes, begging all to conduct themselves well, and not to give me any more pain during these few days of life that are before me; and this I hope from the love and the obedience that you have always shown to me. I bless you all.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] Monsignor, our Father, ordains that a copy of this letter should be sent to the house of SS. Trinità at Ciorani, and to the house of S. Maria, Mater Domini, at Caposele. He adds that, after having appointed for the house of S. Michele dei Pagani the Rector, the Consultors and Admonitor mentioned above, that is, Fathers Mazzini, etc., he appoints as Rector of Ciorani Father Bartolomeo Corrado, with Fathers Liguori and Leo as Consultors, and Father Buonamano as Admonitor.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 733.

To Doctor Don Felice de Ferrellis, Administrator of the Church of S. Nicola.

He asks him for a small sum of money.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 30, 1773.

Very Honored Sir: Have the kindness to send me fifteen ducats [2] from the treasury of the parish of S. Nicola. They are to be given in payment of the expenses of the process that is being pleaded at Naples on the subject of tithes.[3]

1 The copy sent to the house at Caposele bears the following postscript. "I have thought it well to appoint Father Santorelli Rector of this house of S. Maria, Mater Domini; his Consultors are Fathers d'Agostino and Fiore; Father Robertis is Admonitor; Father d'Agostino, Prefect of the students."

2 63.75 frs.

3 The Syndic of Arienzo had forbidden the payment of the usual tithes. St. Alphonsus courageously sustained the rights of his priests and carried the matter to Naples. (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. chap. lxvi.)

I herewith declare that I will take upon myself to pay these fifteen ducats.

Believe me,

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved at S. Maria a Vico in the private oratory of Donna Emilia Iadaresta.

LETTER 734.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, in the House at Ciorani.

He begs him to accept a charge.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[ARIENZO, July 1773.]

I learn with great displeasure, my dear Diodato, that you have exhibited great repugnance to the exercise of the office of Minister at Ciorani, although this had been arranged between Father Andrea [Villani] and myself. But, what has given me the greatest pain, was to know that you had taken counsel, and you have been told, it appears, that you were not obliged to obey.

When one has made a vow of obedience, there is only one point in which he is not obliged to obey; it is in the matter of sin.

Indeed, I am glad that the Congregation possesses so wise counsellors!

I do not wish to oblige you to exercise this charge; but for the love of the Blessed Virgin, I beg you to accept it. I repeat: I will not force you to do so; but give me this satisfaction; if not, it will make me grieve, for this house at Ciorani has been for a long time in disorder, and I know that you can contribute greatly to put it on a good footing.

You could at present with Father Bartolomeo Corrado [the new Rector] insist vigorously on observance; this you know would be for the greater glory of God.

I beg you to go for a few moments before the Blessed Sacrament: our Lord will surely help you to change your mind.

I also inform you that, if you remain obstinate in not affording me this pleasure, your conscience will trouble you during your whole life.

Once more; I do not wish to force you to accept, but I repeat: give me this pleasure, and Jesus Christ will reward you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 735.

To Canon Don Diodato Lucca, at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He asks him to render a service to a monastery.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 20, 1773.

My Dear Canon: The Prince della Riccia writes me a special letter and charges me to appoint you a deputy in the affair of Don Giovanni Mango. The latter is to render an account of the administration of the revenues of the monastery at Airola. In concert with Don Bartolomeo Bartolini you are to present to the examiners the accounts of the monastery, and to give to these gentlemen all the information that they may need. In case you would refuse this charge, the prince tells me to impose it upon you.

I do not impose it upon you; but as the prince takes so

deep an interest in the monastery, I would beg you to afford me this pleasure.

I give you my pastoral blessing, and remain,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 736.

To Prince della Riccia.

Zeal of the saint against scandals.

ARIENZO, August 2, 1773.

Your Excellency: In compliance with your request, I have induced Canon Don Diodato Lucca and the priest Don Bartolomeo Bartolini, to give their consent to aid the examiners of accounts in the affair of Don Giovanni Mango, late administrator of the revenues of the monastery. All will go well, I hope, and the interest of the convent will not suffer in anything.

I would now ask your Excellency for a favor.

I must inform you that during the past month certain comedians arrived here at Arienzo, bringing with them two girls dressed as men.

In my quality of pastor, and being obliged as such to remove from my flock all occasions of scandal, I addressed myself to the governor of this place and to the agent of the Duke of Maddaloni; with their co-operation I succeeded, not without much trouble, in making this company of comedians depart from Arienzo. The latter said that they wished to go to Naples or to Maddaloni, and I believed that they were out of my diocese, when yesterday, to my sorrow, I heard the contrary. They are really at Airola, and it is in a house connected with your Excellency's palace that they are giving representations.

I come then to beg you to send your orders to Airola that the company should be dismissed.

The two girls, they say, give no scandal, and do nothing improper. No; but they are dressed as men, and surely this is not edifying.

I am certain that, wherever these comedians go, these two dancers on the tight rope are doing the work of the devil. I beg your Excellency, to be so kind as to comply with my request, so that my conscience may be at rest.

Please accept the expression of perfect consideration and profound respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of the Benedictine Fathers of the college of S. Ambrogio at Rome.

LETTER 737.

To the Lay-brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

He censures one of their pretensions and exhorts them to practise humility.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[ARIENZO, 1773?]

My dear Brothers: I have made myself familiar with the contents of your long letter in which I read, that all the great trials that afflict you may be reduced to this, that you are no longer permitted to wear the long habit, such as the Fathers wear, but that your habit must be a palm[1] shorter, as has been the custom in our Institute from the beginning.

The use of the simar lasted but a short time; I do not

[1] About ten or eleven inches.

know whether it was worn even for an entire year; then the use of it was abandoned by order of Bishop Falcoia.

To this I alone can testify, since of that time there is no other Father left. This has been the custom for forty-one years, as our Institute dates from 1732.

It is not at all true that this usage is against modesty; on the contrary it is conformable to the humility that should be shown by those that are not priests.

Brother N. was one of the subjects that exhibited but little humility; when he appeared in different places with a habit not quite so short as that worn by the other Brothers, he wished people to believe that he was one of the Fathers.

The Brothers of the Order of St. Jerome wear a habit that reaches scarcely below the knees, and they do not appear to be immodestly dressed. The Brothers of the Fathers of the Mission wear not even a habit, but only garments like those worn by the peasants. The Brothers of the Chinese College all wear the short habit.

It is not the Fathers, but I myself that have always recommended the wearing of the short habit by the Brothers, in order that they may be kept in humility, that they may be distinguished from the Fathers, and that the people may not give them the title of *your Reverence* as they give to priests.

Do you not see, my dear Brothers, that this pretension on your part is only pride? How dare you go to Communion three times a week with sentiments of pride so manifest?

I wish you well as I do all the Fathers; for we are all brethren; but if any one is proud, I will not acknowledge him for my brother, because the proud are hated by God.

For the love of God, be calm and do not give pleasure to the devil.

You have left your families to give yourselves entirely to God and to sanctify yourselves; but how can you arrive at

sanctity if you are filled with sentiments, which are the result of pride?

You tell me in your letter that the Rule ordains that all should live in a uniform manner. This is understood only in regard to the Fathers and not in regard to the Brothers. Thus it was decided by our founder, Bishop Falcoia, and has been thus practised these past forty-one years.

In conclusion, I beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ that he may give me a good death, for my end is approaching; and for the love of the Blessed Virgin, who was so humble, never more think of this affair about the habit. He that will not keep quiet, I assure him that he will lose the Madonna's protection.

The letter that you have written to me has given me great pain; but I hope that the Blessed Virgin will take away from you this notion, and help to make you saints; this is my desire. I bless you.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 738.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

He accepts his resignation of an office.—What he thinks of disturbers of the peace.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 12, 1773.

I answer your letter.

I accept, though with regret, your resignation as Consultor.

Act thus: choose a subject who appears to you to be most fit to discharge this office, and declare to the Community that I wish him to be Consultor.

Nevertheless, if you are no longer Consultor, you are always a child of the Congregation; and I desire that in the case in which there would be question of a considerable good or evil for the Congregation, you should advise the

new Rector, who is not fully acquainted with matters, especially with matters concerning the house. If you do not advise him, who will do so?

I praise the moderation which you have shown under present circumstances. But I do not understand what you mean, when you speak of a calumny that has been brought against you and to which the Father Vicar and others have given credit.

The Father Vicar and I know your spirit, and the measures that we have taken in regard to those subjects who are the authors of all these troubles, will make you see whether we have a bad opinion of you. These subjects have been distributed among the different houses; but they did not amend; and, therefore, I have resolved to dismiss all of them. It is a strange thing! God, at present seems to wish the Congregation to prosper, and it is also at present that the devil raises against it a thousand storms. These troubles, these storms caused by imperfect religious, have obliged the poor Father Vicar to hasten, first to Ciorani, then to Benevento.

Have prayers said, for pity's sake; for the devil is raising a commotion.

Your bishop has just written me a very consoling letter; he is greatly pleased, I think, to see the expulsion of several subjects who created trouble in your house.

May God be blessed for sending me in my last days so much bitterness in regard to the Congregation!

Remember me every day at your Mass. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in our house at Boulogne-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais), France.

LETTER 739.

To Canon Lignola, at Naples.

Charity of the saint to a poor girl.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[ARIENZO], August 22, 1773.

I have heard that in the holy house of the Hospital of Incurables there is a certain Maria N. . .

She is an orphan of Arienzo, twenty years of age, and endowed with rare beauty. Left to herself, without parents to guide her, she went to Naples where for some time she led a bad life.

Her desire now is to enter a house of refuge; but to my great regret I do not know where to put her.

I, therefore, appeal to your kindness and to your charity, and I beg you for the honor of God to permit this young woman to enter the asylum of S. Raffaele, of which you are the director.

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lx.

LETTER 740.

To the Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, especially to the Superiors of the Missions.

Rules in regard to the missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[September 1773?]

1. It is not necessary, nor is it advisable, that all the Fathers of every house should go on missions; the Rector shall choose for this purpose those that are capable and that are in good health.

2. If the mission be given in the diocese in which the house is situated, the Rector shall choose them as I have said; but in regard to the missions that are to be given in

the dioceses in which there are none of our houses, there should be sent no other subjects than those appointed by me or by my Vicar [Father Andrea Villani].

3. There shall be observed on the missions the ancient customs regarding the quality of the food, the refusal of dainties, of birds, of chickens, of expensive fish, and the like. Our missionaries must not accept the re-imbursement of expenses, neither from the municipality, nor from the pastors; nor should they ever accept any invitation to dine out; only if the bishop should invite them, they may dine with him once, and if he sends a present it may be accepted.

4. [The Superiors of the missions] should take care to punish those subjects who fail in any way against modesty or show any impertinence to our brethren; and much more so, if they fail in courtesy towards strangers; we should treat every one, even persons of the world, with kindness and charity.

5. Every two weeks, or at least every month, during the missions, the Superiors shall report, either to me or to my Vicar, those that have committed a grave fault.

6. The Superior shall not allow any grave fault to pass unpunished; he may even, if he thinks fit, send the delinquent home, as soon as the mission is finished.

7. Let the Superiors be watchful that the Fathers preach in a simple manner, without declamation, without vain ornaments and high-sounding words. They shall reprove and punish those that fail in this respect; and if the guilty ones do not amend, they shall forbid them to preach, and may even interrupt them in the middle of the sermon, of the instruction, or of any other exercise. It is simplicity that has made our missions successful. If any one should lay claim to the performance of any exercise, to the preaching of any sermon, instruction, etc., such a thing must be absolutely refused him. He that has such pretensions will do very little good; for God does not assist

the proud. On the other hand, those on whom the duty of performing some exercise has been imposed, must obey. Especially should faults against obedience be punished, and a report of them should be sent to my Vicar.

8. In all the missions there shall be appointed a Zelator, who is charged with noting down all the faults that he sees, and who is to give information of them to the Superior.

9. When any one has been charged with settling some dispute, he shall not side with either party, but shall be simply the mediator. If, however, there is some evident reason in favor of one of the parties, it will be well to make a statement of it, so that the truth may be known.

10. The missionaries shall make every month a day or two of retreat in solitude, as has always been our custom.

11. When there is a great concourse of people, care should be taken to hear the confessions, first of the men, and then of the women.

12. To no subject shall permission be given to keep for himself money, linen, tobacco, or any other thing; all things shall be kept in common. Whatever one receives must be given to the Superior, who will afterwards deliver it to the Rector of the house that is giving the mission.

13. Every one must keep from meddling with wills and marriage cases, unless this be done solely to prevent scandal or some other occasion of sin.

14. In commuting vows, no one shall apply to himself, under the pretext of using it for pious works, the sum of money that must perhaps be spent in fulfilling the vow.

My Brethren, you know that the only end of our Institute is the work of the missions; if we fail in this work, or if it is performed in a defective manner, the Institute is destroyed. It would be better to stop the missions than to give them to the detriment of our spiritual good with but little edification to the people. We should go on missions,

not to preach or to gain applause, but to save souls by submitting to the rules laid down by the Superiors.

This circular shall be read in Chapter in the presence of all the subjects of the house, so that every one may be attentive to his duty. It shall also be read every year during the month of October before the Fathers go on missions.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 741.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the House at Scifelli.

He sends him money and determines its use.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 2, 1773.

I lately sent you, my dear Father Francesco, two ounces[1] to Veroli; and to-day I send you four ounces more through Father Blasucci; but with this money you must buy only the necessaries of life, not books, as I hear that your Fathers at Veroli are enduring great privations.

I have made great efforts to obtain those hundred ducats from [D. Benedetto] Grazioli, and I had hoped that with this money help would be given to Veroli for the coming winter; but I learn to my great sorrow that it has served to buy books. To buy books when one has nothing to eat! Whoever heard of anything so foolish?

If those books could be returned, even at some loss, it would be well to do so; for I should very much like that all that is given to you should be used for the purpose of buying bread, which will certainly be wanting to you.

In case the books cannot be returned, take counsel with

[1] The simple ounce is equivalent to 13.04 frs.

Father Blasucci as to what means we must adopt that it may not become known that we are sending pecuniary aid outside of the kingdom.[1]

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 742.

To Father Tommaso Maria Caputo, a Dominican, Rector of the Seminary of S. Agata.

Severity of the saint in regard to some seminarians that feigned illness.

[ARIENZO, September 4, 1773.]

As for the sick seminarians, I have taken all pains that I could to arrive at the truth. I have caused them to come to me, and have found that some of them really do require to remain away in order to take baths on account of fever; and, like yourself, I have my doubts about several.

Enough about this point. I am going to send letters to all the seminarians, even those in the most distant villages, ordering them, under pain of expulsion, to return to the seminary; I except only the case in which the state of their health would prevent them from coming.

I am engaged in inquiring about the absence of one of them, which is said to be without necessity. If it be true, I hope that his expulsion may serve as an example to all those that may be tempted to imitate his example.

1 The Neapolitan government interfered very much with the affairs of the religious Orders, and it was at this time so prejudiced against our Congregation that St. Alphonsus had secretly to send the help that his children needed at Scifelli. Farther on we shall see that this interference and these pretensions surpassed all bounds, so that the saint found himself constrained formally to forbid the Fathers of the Pontifical States to accept and to carry away the least sum of money when they preached in the kingdom of Naples.

I must beg your Reverence to make inquiries, and to be firm when you are in doubt about any of them, even if the physician's opinion should be in favor of the seminarian; or at least, in this case write to me.

Let us try to do what we can, for I fear that the illness of some is only feigned. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter xlv.

LETTER 743.

To Father Luigi Capuano.

He recommends simplicity in preaching and exhorts him to obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 7, 1773.

My dear Don Luigi: Your letter has pierced my heart, since it proves to me that the style of studied elegance is creeping into the Congregation. If I mistake not, you are of the number of those that are given to this fault, and I am grieved at your example as it is of such a nature that it has an influence over others.

I am willing to believe that you preach in a simple manner when you give missions; but I fear that the style of studied elegance that you have adopted in panegyrics may soon pass over into the sermons of the missions, just as has happened in a certain Congregation of Naples.

Read, my dear Father, the letter that I have written on the manner of preaching, which is found in my *Sunday Sermons*. Take notice of what I say in accordance with Muratori when I speak of panegyrics. Why not speak in a simple style when speaking of the virtues of the saints? Read in my *Sunday Sermons*, Sermon xxxi. on Communion, the sermons on St. Joseph, on the Annunciation, and on the Sorrows of Mary, at the end of the same work.

Carefully avoid in your sermons, my dear Father, every

pretentious and affected word. Let all that you say be familiar and adapted to the comprehension of persons of the dullest intelligence.[1] We should always choose language that is most intelligible to the hearers, and not high-flown words the sense of which is not clear, and which only

[1] The examples given in Italian by the saint are not capable of being translated literally. We, however, insert here some examples with pertinent remarks that approach somewhat the ideas that the holy bishop had on this subject. We quote from Hill's "Principles of Rhetoric," page 79. Under the heading, *The Vulgarity of Fine Writing*, Hill says: "It is, certainly, incumbent on him who would write well to avoid *fine writing;* that is, writing to display his verbal wardrobe. 'As in dress, furniture, deportment, etc., so also in language: the dread of vulgarity constantly besetting those who are half-conscious that they are in danger of it drives them into the extreme of affected finery.' (Whately: "Elements of Rhetoric," part iii. chap. i. sect. ii.) The evil thus characterized by Whately has increased during the forty years that have elapsed since he wrote, till now it infests the newspapers, magazines, and novels of the day, being, of course, at its worst in the least reputable quarters.

"In *fine writing* every clapping of hands is an 'ovation,' every fortune 'colossal,' every marriage an 'alliance,' every crowd a 'sea of faces.' A hair-dresser becomes a 'tonsorial artist;' an apple-stand, a 'bureau of Pomona;' an old carpenter, a 'gentleman long identified with the building interest.' A man does not breakfast, but he 'discusses (or 'partakes of') the morning repast;' he does not sit down at table, but he 'repairs to the festive board;' he does not go home, but he 'proceeds to his residence;' he does not go to bed, but he 'retires to his downy couch;' he sits not for his portrait, but for his 'counterfeit presentment;' he no longer waltzes, but 'he participates in round dances;' he is not thanked, but he is 'the recipient of grateful acknowledgments.' A house is not building, but is 'in process of erection;' it is not all burned down, but is 'destroyed in its entirety by the devouring element.' A ship is not launched, but it 'glides into its native element.' When a man narrowly escapes drowning, 'the waves are balked of their prey.' Not only presidents, but aqueducts, millinery shops, and railroad strikes are 'inaugurated.' We no longer threaten, but we 'indulge in minatory expressions.' Modest 'I' has given place to pompous 'we'".—Ed.

nourish the self-love of the one that speaks. Segneri was one of the great preachers; but in regard to the subject of which I am speaking he was not free from faults. It is true, what one commits to paper is always more elaborate than what one utters in the pulpit; and I think that Segneri was much more simple in preaching his sermons than in writing them.

You have talents, my dear Father; but when you compose your sermons, set yourself to retrench therefrom all that is merely for the fashionable world, and employ only the language that is usual and is adapted to the intelligence of all classes of people. I repeat, let there be nothing pretentious; you will thus be without scruple, and your sermons will be productive of much fruit. When by a language excessively choice, one wishes to appear eloquent, a certain vanity will always creep in, and will deprive one of the divine assistance. I shall not repeat here what I mentioned in my last letter.

We must also guard against speaking in a monotonous tone. Once, while imitating Father Cutica, I fell into this defect in the presence of Bishop Falcoia; but this prelate corrected me in such a manner that I never relapsed into the same fault. Even when we speak with animation, why should we not vary in a simple and natural manner the tone of voice? When in the pulpit we should speak as if we were addressing several persons assembled in an apartment, entertaining them on some virtue or relating to them some event. Thereby we preserve an agreeable tone without sounding the trumpet, and the happiest results are produced.

As regards the office of Minister which has been imposed upon you, have patience. In the reform which it has been thought necessary to establish lately, in order to prevent the *decadence* of the Congregation, efforts have been made to choose good Ministers, especially in the houses where

the Rectors are invalids. This is the reason why you were thought of, for you are more able and prudent than others. Offer then to God all that you have to suffer.

Be so kind as to read to the young men what I have just written about preaching.

I esteem you very much, dear Father, and I venture to prophesy that you will have much to labor and to suffer for Jesus Christ, and that you will conduct many souls to Paradise.

At present think of carrying the cross of obedience; labor to become a saint, and pray for me who have already a foot in the grave.

Salute Don Giovanni for me. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 744.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He encourages her to obey her new director and to prepare herself for suffering. She should meditate assiduously on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 8, 1773.

I was greatly consoled on hearing that Father Scaia is willing to be so charitable as to come twice a month to direct you without disquieting thereby any other penitent.

Render thanks to Jesus Christ for having found for you this good Father who, from what I see in your letter, guides you in so perfect a manner.

Do not, therefore, think any more of what has hitherto been told you either by myself or by Father Savastano, and obey him in everything; yes, I repeat, in everything, in regard to Communion, penances, and other acts of obedience.

I hear that, after you had been placed under his direction, you conceived the idea of repenting of it. I hope that this was merely a temptation, because the resolution of leaving such a guide might be your total ruin.

In your prayers always promise Jesus Christ to obey this good Father; pray to God that he may preserve him to you, and make it a matter of conscience never to disobey him in any matter whatever.

Always keep yourself in readiness, while offering yourself to Jesus Christ, to endure contradictions on the part of the Sisters and the Abbess, to suffer sickness, scruples, aridities, and all interior and exterior torments. It is with the chisels of tribulations that God forms statues that are to adorn his Paradise, and especially with the chisel of interior tribulations, which are the most painful.

Present my respects to your new director, Father Scaia, as also to Father Saverio, and beg them to recommend me to Jesus Christ during the Sacrifice of the Mass. I promise to do the same thing for them. And as for you—do not cease to recommend me as you have done before; on my part, I continue to do so for you as always. Do not omit to write to me from time to time, above all when the devil tempts you to leave your director, Father Scaia, on account of some displeasure you may experience.

As for your niece, try to aid her by acts of charity as much as you can; and if you see that your words produce no effect, do not trouble yourself.

I bless you in the Heart of Jesus Christ.

Of these two little works that I send you, the first, *Considerations on the Passion of Jesus Christ*, you may use in your prayers when you meditate on the Passion. I use it myself every day. I recommend to you never to allow any day to pass without recalling to your mind at least something of the Passion by the aid of this book or

of another. The Passion has been the continual subject of meditation for the saints.

I also read every day something of the other little work entitled *Pious Reflections, etc.*[1] I wish you to do the same; for I have composed it specially for those souls that desire to give themselves entirely to God.

I beg you also to say some words about God to my niece when an occasion presents itself.

And I again revert to my first recommendation: never leave your present director, Father Scaia; for, from what I see, it will be difficult for you to find another who is as capable as he to lead souls to perfection.

After an old copy.

LETTER 745.

To Prince della Riccia.

He informs him of the measures taken for the chastisement of a culprit.

ARIENZO, September 20, 1773.

Your Excellency: I have received the letter which you have done me the honor to write to me, and in which you bid me to exercise justice as soon as possible against the priest Ferace of Moiano.

I must tell your Excellency that on account of the solicitations of the adverse party, the king has sent me a large number of despatches, and all concerning the same

1 *Pious Reflections on various subjects of Spirituality.* The saint published them in 1773, jointly with a work entitled: "Reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ and other Spiritual Subjects, for the Use of Pious Souls."

subject; to all I answered by sending reports, and I did not lose a moment in settling this affair.

The matter stands thus: The first accusations brought against the above-mentioned Ferace are at present being examined by the officials at Benevento, and this by order of the king. As for the second accusation, information was obtained from my chancery, and a voluminous report has been compiled on this subject.

His Majesty requires that a report of the result of the investigation should be sent to him. He shall be obeyed, and I will make every effort that justice may be done as soon as possible.

Your Excellency will please accept the expression of perfect consideration and of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 746.

To Don Liborio Carfora.

He asks a favor of him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 2, 1773.

I have heard that the clerk Perez has arrived here to collect the tithes; he, therefore, needs, as he needed the last time, the assistance of the deputies.

Please give him your co-operation, and, in my name, invite your companions also to assist him.

I have received from Count de Cerreto a letter about the lime. I send it to you enclosed, so that you may show it to those gentlemen.

I bless you and beg you to believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 747.

To Prince della Riccia.

He charitably complies with a desire of the prince.

ARIENZO, October 6, 1773.

Your Excellency: The answer that I have had the honor to address to you touching Crescenzo d'Ambrosia of Forchia, was dictated to me by financial straits in which my seminary at Sant' Agata has been for a long time. I did not believe that I could diminish anything of the thirty ducats, which your protégé had to pay to the seminary for the education of each of his two sons.

Since that time, Canon Niccolò Giordano, also a native of Forchia, has accidentally apprised me that Crescenzo frequently visited the house of your Excellency. I supposed then that you wished to render a service to this man. I have sent for him and have deducted twelve ducats of the annual sum which he was to pay. If I had been able to go farther, your Excellency may be assured, I would have done so; but it would have been only to please you; for my seminary is loaded with debts, and provisions are generally very dear.

May it please your Excellency to accept this mark

of deference due to you, and believe the perfect consideration with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 748.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to perfect detachment.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 18, 1773.

I have received the little basket.

You know very well that I no longer eat sweetmeats; but I cannot but thank you for all the fine things that you have sent me.

I rejoice more and more that you have found that good spiritual Father who gives you assistance twice a month.

I wish you never to leave him, whatever repugnance may in future arise; but I also wish that you be detached even from your spiritual Father. If it pleased God to send him elsewhere, if he became sick, or if God called him to himself, what would you do? Would you despair? Oh, keep yourself always united to the will of God! Jesus Christ should be your all, your hope, and your only love.

When in prayer you receive any sweet dew from heaven, thank the Lord for it, and promise that you will be faithful to him whenever the winds of the earth arise. God does not wish these favors to be of long duration; keep yourself, therefore, always in readiness to do violence to yourself in order to suffer tribulations. God requires this little violence in order that you may sanctify yourself.

Do not, for mercy's sake, say anything more to me about your brother. When this little passion begins to annoy you, say at once: O my Jesus! I desire only Thee, and nothing more.

I continue to live in the midst of many infirmities. Pray to God that he may give me the grace to be always resigned to his will; it is the only prayer that I ask for myself, and that is the prayer that I recite for you.

All the rules that Father Scaia has marked out for you are excellent.

The Abbess has asked me for my work on the Passion; I send it to you that you may give it to her for me, on condition that she recommends me to Jesus Christ.

I also send you herewith a little work. Please give it, or see that it is given, to my niece. Tell her that when she has read it and has grown taller, I will send her a large book. Let her read this little book attentively; it just suits her, and a careful study of it would suffice to make her a saint. Tell her to pray to God for me as I am praying for her.

May Jesus and Mary possess our hearts entirely!

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 749.

To Mother Maria Saveria Foglia, Prioress of the Monastery of Regina Cœli at Airola.

Measures that are to be taken to protect the interests of the monastery.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 20, 1773.

I have read your letter, and I would say that, in order to spare your Community long disquietudes and greater expenses, I invited Don Giovanni Mango and the appointed revisers to come to me to discuss the matter. They were to find out the best means to protect the interests of your monastery,—interests that I have greatly at heart, more so perhaps than my own. Thank God, I have succeeded; and this is what has been decided: Don Giovanni will surrender to the revisers all his books, even those that contain the accounts already examined; the revisers will go to Airola, where with the deputies they will examine everything. Then, after you as well as Don Giovanni have been heard, the old accounts, already examined, will be looked over, to see whether certain sums have been entered, and if this be the case, those sums will be added to the new account.

This done, the revision of the latter will be in order. If it happens that Don Giovanni is your debtor, your monastery will be paid; if on the contrary, Don Giovanni is recognized as your creditor, he will bind himself not to claim anything before the revision of the accounts that were before given by him.

The affairs are now out of danger, and your monastery is secure against every loss. I repeat, and do not doubt it, the interests of your house are dear to me, perhaps dearer to me than my own.

I bless you and all your Sisters and wish you to believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Don Carlo de Filippis, No. 11 *Via Forno Vecchio*, at Naples.

LETTER 750.

To Prince della Riccia.

The same subject.

ARIENZO, November 20, 1773.

Your Excellency: I have not forgotten the just requests that you have made to me in favor of the monastery of *Regina Cœli*, situated in your city of Airola, in which, like yourself, I have always taken a lively interest. Hence I believe myself obliged to make known to you in detail, all that regards the rendering (which has begun to-day) of accounts held during a certain number of years by Don Giovanni Mango, administrator of that monastery.

Your Excellency knows that I have first intrusted to the treasurer Roberci and to Canon Albanese (two men of recognized capacity and rectitude) the examination of the accounts which extend from the year 1769 to this year 1773 inclusively, and which had not yet been presented. This measure was taken with the consent and approval of both parties.

Some time afterwards, the religious addressed to me a new petition, and asked that the preceding accounts should also be examined, that is, those that extended from 1765 to 1768 inclusively, and that had already been examined. I thought it best to intrust this examination to the same persons just mentioned.

But at once troubles and discussions began. Don Mango contended that *the parties should first proceed to the revision of accounts not yet examined, in order to arrive afterwards and successively to the revision of the preceding accounts, in which he has credits entered in due form.* The religious, on the other hand, forcibly insisted that, *before proceeding to the examination of the last accounts not yet presented, the preceding accounts should first be revised;* and this, they said, because of the connection that existed between the two, particularly as to the receipts which, according to them, were not entered. Another reason is, that they did not wish to find themselves in the condition of being obliged to pay Don Mango the sum for which he might be creditor during these last years, unless they could reclaim the sum of which the first accounts might constitute him a debtor, either for expenses incorrectly entered, or for receipts that were not entered at all. This incident then stopped the course of affairs, and a lively dispute arose between the two parties, each of whom threatened to appeal from the decision that would be given, and to engage consequently in a long and expensive litigation.

In order to extinguish this conflagration and to obviate all litigation, I sent for Don Giovanni Mango and the aforesaid revisers. I also called for the deputies of the monastery; then in company with my Vicar-General, we endeavored to come to some understanding which should protect justice, while preventing an untimely lawsuit.

The result of this deliberation was, to induce Don Giovanni Mango (who, moreover, protested that he had in view only truth and justice) to conclude the following arrangement: The revisers shall go to Airola with books in hand; there, without however making a formal and detailed examination, they shall look over the receipts of the first years, 1765—1768; and if certain receipts are found

not to have been entered, these shall at once be carried to the new accounts that are to be examined. Omitting then all detailed revision, they shall proceed in due form to the examination of the accounts that were not yet rendered. Don Mango shall, however, previously consent and formally bind himself to the following, namely: the conclusions of this examination shall not be executory, and he, Mango, in case he be acknowledged a creditor, cannot claim anything before the revisers have examined in detail the preceding accounts, discussed all the expenses one by one, and lastly given the credit that is recognized to be lawful.

With these conditions, the affair, I flatter myself, is doing well; no one has reason to complain, and the interests of the monastery are protected without danger of a lawsuit. This is what I gave the religious to understand this morning when I wrote to them.

I communicate these details to your Excellency, to make you perfectly acquainted with all that passes, so that you may sustain, if necessary, by your authority this mode of acting, which seems to me to be prudent, and which prevented a menacing lawsuit. Please accept the sentiments of sincere esteem with which I am,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 751.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He speaks to him about various apostolic labors and the difficulties which are met with.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 21, 1773.

I received the note which announced to me your arrival in company with Mgr. Borgia, and I answered you some days ago that I was expecting you.

I feared that you could not come on account of the rains; but the weather has turned out fine, and you have not come.

I also mentioned in my letter that, in case Mgr. Borgia could not accompany you (for he may be detained on account of business in his diocese, especially since there will be an ordination at Christmas) you might come alone. I again request you to come before you set out on the missions.

Take a conveyance going and returning, for I do not wish to keep you here; one day will suffice for consulting you on various points, and you may then return at once to your post.

Fathers Blasucci and Mancusi are still at S. Agata, and, I am told, they will remain there the whole week. Since I am speaking of Father Mancusi, I must now tell you, that you have greatly pained me on his account; you have in fact forced me to send him back when the time of the retreat at S. Agata had arrived, and his help was so justly needed by me to put a finishing touch to so difficult a work as the *Translation of the Psalms*. If I had known that you destined him to be Father Blasucci's companion, I should have had him come here a long time ago; for it is a long time since I informed you that two Fathers were

necessary at Sant' Agata. The time of the retreat having then arrived, I had to send back Father Mancusi, and I was then so embarrassed that I had the printing of the work stopped. But enough; what is done is done.

I now beg you to come to see me. You will be, I know, very busy; but, as I have said, it will suffice to have you you here only one day.

The affair at Rome meets with difficulties; for I have received letters telling me that the Cardinals of the Congregation [of Bishops and Regulars] think of taking possession of all the effects of the houses of the Jesuits, suppressed in the Romagna, without replacing the latter by religious who might continue their work. If this is true, all our hopes will end in smoke, and in the mean time, our poor Fathers at Veroli [Scifelli] will have little hope of having anything to live on. May the divine will be always done in all things!

I bless you and all your subjects, and I expect you.

Gloria Patri! After having written this letter I read yours which you have addressed to Father Mancusi, imposing on him a mission at Salerno, besides a novena at Nola, and a retreat at the seminary of Aversa.

Let us now come to our affairs.

As I see the need of the mission at Salerno, I will practise patience for the present; but I beg you, dear Father, if you can snatch a moment at this mission, or at least after its close, come to give me a day, for I hear that Mgr. Borgia cannot come.

As for Father Mancusi, he was useful to me at the present time; but you must send him back to me, at least after the mission at Salerno, or after the retreat at Aversa. He is now needed elsewhere, I see, and I must be patient.

In regard to the novena of the Immaculate Conception at Nola, Father Mancusi writes to me that the city of Nola is an important city, where he would not venture to impro-

vise. He is right; for precisely at Nola, it is desired that the preacher shall always speak of the Conception of Mary; hence my sermons were not liked, because I did not always treat of this subject.

You may then write to Nola (this is a just pretext) that the Archbishop of Salerno wishes to have a mission there on account of the disasters occasioned by the rains, and that we cannot refuse, being obliged, as we are, to obey the archbishop on account of having a house in his diocese.

By all means should Salerno be preferred, as it needs a good many subjects and is not an easy place. At the last mission we were eighteen Fathers.

What is now to be done with Blasucci and Mancusi, as they have begun the retreat at the monastery at Sant' Agata? If I send word to them to interrupt it, they will always need four or five days to reach Salerno. They can, I think, arrive at Salerno by the end of this week, and in this way they would not interrupt their retreat. What about the religious? I will write this evening to Blasucci that the religious should be satisfied with the following arrangement, namely, one of the preachers will remain to finish the retreat, and the other will set out for Salerno.

O God, what confusion! I should think, Blasucci could give the novena at Nola all alone. But it would be still better, I think, to send him to Salerno where he is certainly needed. As for this novena at Nola, I am of opinion that you should always refuse it; for it is a troublesome thing (and we must sacrifice for it two of our best subjects); the result is insignificant. Besides, this novena is to be preached at the moment when sometimes the most important missions are to begin.

I will, however, write to Blasucci; but it will be difficult for him to go to Nola, and I would prefer to see him go to Salerno. Hence I know not what to do. Nevertheless, if the mission at Salerno is given, the novena will hardly

succeed; and, therefore, I will hold to the opinion of the two Fathers at Sant' Agata. Besides, God knows when this letter will reach you.

Since you cannot come now, I expect you on the first day on which you will be free. I would, however, like to know whether you are still of the opinion that an answer given by me to Abate Magli, could bring about the complete ruin of the Congregation? Good God! the Congregation was not destroyed when I sent a reply to Father Patuzzi, who made a figure different from that of Abate Magli; and now because I would answer Abate Magli, who is regarded as a fanatic (I am told, every one regards him as such), this destruction should follow? How is this?[1]

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Tell me at once where I must send Fathers Blasucci and Maucusi after the retreat is over; or rather, let me know what you have resolved to do.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 752.

To Don Pasquale Bartolino, at Airola.[2]

He asks him to give a course of spiritual exercises.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 21, 1773.

The religious of the monastery of S. Filippo in this city have asked me for a Father to give them their retreat.

[1] The second part of this letter is altogether scientific, and will be found in the *Special Correspondence*.

[2] The priest Don Pasquale Bartolino was later on a witness in the process of the beatification of St. Alphonsus. The following is a passage from his deposition: "I saw for the first time the servant of God in 1756, on the occasion of the retreat given by him to the children of the public schools at Naples. I attended this retreat, and the great good, that it accomplished, made me admire the zeal

My Fathers are all giving missions; I have, therefore, thought of you. I beg you then to come here on the last day of the month, to begin the retreat for these religious on the following day.

Nothing, I hope, will prevent you from coming. I beg you to render this service; for these poor religious could not and would not have a Father to come from Naples; they are greatly embarrassed.

I will see to your lodging, you will stay with me during the eight days that you have to spend here.

I send this by a messenger, for the affair is pressing. I give you my blessing.

Believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 753.

To the Prince della Riccia.

He asks him to proceed rigorously against a blasphemer.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 26, 1773.

Your Excellency: I received the letter which you sent me about the accounts of Giovanni Mango and the revenues of the monastery of the religious at Airola. I have afterwards had an interview with Don Giovanni. The order of your Excellency will be executed, and the lawyer of the

and the fervor of the preacher. When in 1762, he was called to govern this diocese as its chief pastor, and during the thirteen years of his administration, I frequently saw him; sometimes I conversed with him about the affairs of his pastoral charge."

monastery and the lawyer of Mango will arrange this affair together.

I must now speak to your Excellency about what is going on at Forchia d'Arpaia. There is in this hamlet a horrible blasphemer, named Carmine Giordano, son of the late Giuseppe. He goes so far as to blaspheme God himself and Jesus Christ, and to spit upon them.

As for the blasphemies that he utters against the Most Blessed Virgin, I would not dare to write them on paper, as they are so frightful and execrable.

He continually blasphemes Christ and all the saints.

I have tried to secure witnesses of all these facts; their names are inserted on the slip herewith enclosed.

Your Excellency knows that this infamous man was a long time ago imprisoned for his blasphemies, but he soon began again. At the present time, a *warning* of my chancery is out against him, since for three years he has not complied with the Paschal duty.

Your Excellency should then enjoin upon your agents to search for this culprit; let them, however, do so cautiously, for, I have been told, he is a man of very violent temper. Imprisonment alone will not suffice; as he is incorrigible, I beg you to inflict upon him the chastisement that he deserves.

I firmly trust that your Excellency will at once take the desired measures, and I offer to you the expression of profound respect and perfect consideration with which I have the honor to be,

Your very humble, devoted, and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 754.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

Counsels for a new foundation projected for the diocese of Veroli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 28, 1773.

The Father Vicar Andrea [Villani] sent me your letter, in which you express the fear that I would not accept the foundation at Ceprano.

I have already told you that I am very anxious to have this foundation of Ceprano; for there we can find means to live, and this is not the case (unless God provides) with the house of S. Cecilia [Scifelli].

Surely, I will not abandon, as long as I live, the house of S. Cecilia; but, may God grant that the Rector Major, who succeeds me, will not abandon it! I repeat, you will do well to say this to the French priest [Louis Arnauld] and to the bishop.

It is for this reason that I have written to Father Cimino to strike the iron while it is hot, to do all that he can to secure the foundation at Ceprano by abandoning the others, and even that at Rome; for I see there is but little hope for the latter, and this for a thousand reasons which I omit to write in a letter.

My fear on the subject of Ceprano is, that those who wished to give up the two revenues may withdraw; hence we should have an understanding with the bishop who can do very much, and arrange with him the conditions; for it is inexpedient to show much eagerness in accepting the offer of these two gentlemen. Hell, moreover, will not fail to interfere.

I have already told you that, since you have assured

resources to live on, everything will, little by little, go on well,—the house, the church and the rest. How do they do at Ciorani? at Caiazzo? They say Mass and preach in the parish or neighboring church. Lay aside then every other care, devote yourself to settling the affair at Ceprano as soon as possible. Tell me whether you have spoken to the bishop, whether the latter has said anything to you, whether the gentlemen at Ceprano persevere in their good design?

I have received no letter about this affair. But my wish is that, during the negotiations about this new house, you should often write to me; every week, if necessary.

I am going to write again to Father Cimino that he should prosecute the affair at Ceprano. About going to Rome, we shall speak later on.

In regard to the correspondence, Father Cimino has written to me that, in order to save payment of postage, I should write on the envelope not *Sora per Casamari*, but simply *Sora;* he knows, he says, a person at Sora who will send the letters. But tell me, dear Father, which you prefer; for, if Cimino goes to Rome, or, if the person at Sora does not take care to send you the letters, you will not receive them; on the other hand, the way of Casamari appears to me to be a sure way.

I expect then a prompt answer from you, and I bless you, dear Father; I bless all your subjects, one by one.

Offer my regards to the bishop, to the French priest, and to the Fathers at Casamari, particularly to Don Arsenio.

Brother Alfonso Maria.

[*P. S.*] I pray every morning at Mass for the house at Ceprano.

My letter had been written when I received one from Father Cimino. This Father does not say a word about Ceprano, and does not even say that the affair has been

mentioned to the bishop. I fear then that everything is going to end in smoke. Write to me about the matter.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

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